

LAURA COX ☆ MISS EMILY ☆ MANU LAVIN ☆ JAY HOOKS ☆ LUCKY LOSERS ☆ LIAM ST JOHN ☆ HENRI HERBERT ☆ REBECCA DOWNES ☆ DION ☆ BILLY BRANCH ☆ LEILANI KILGORE

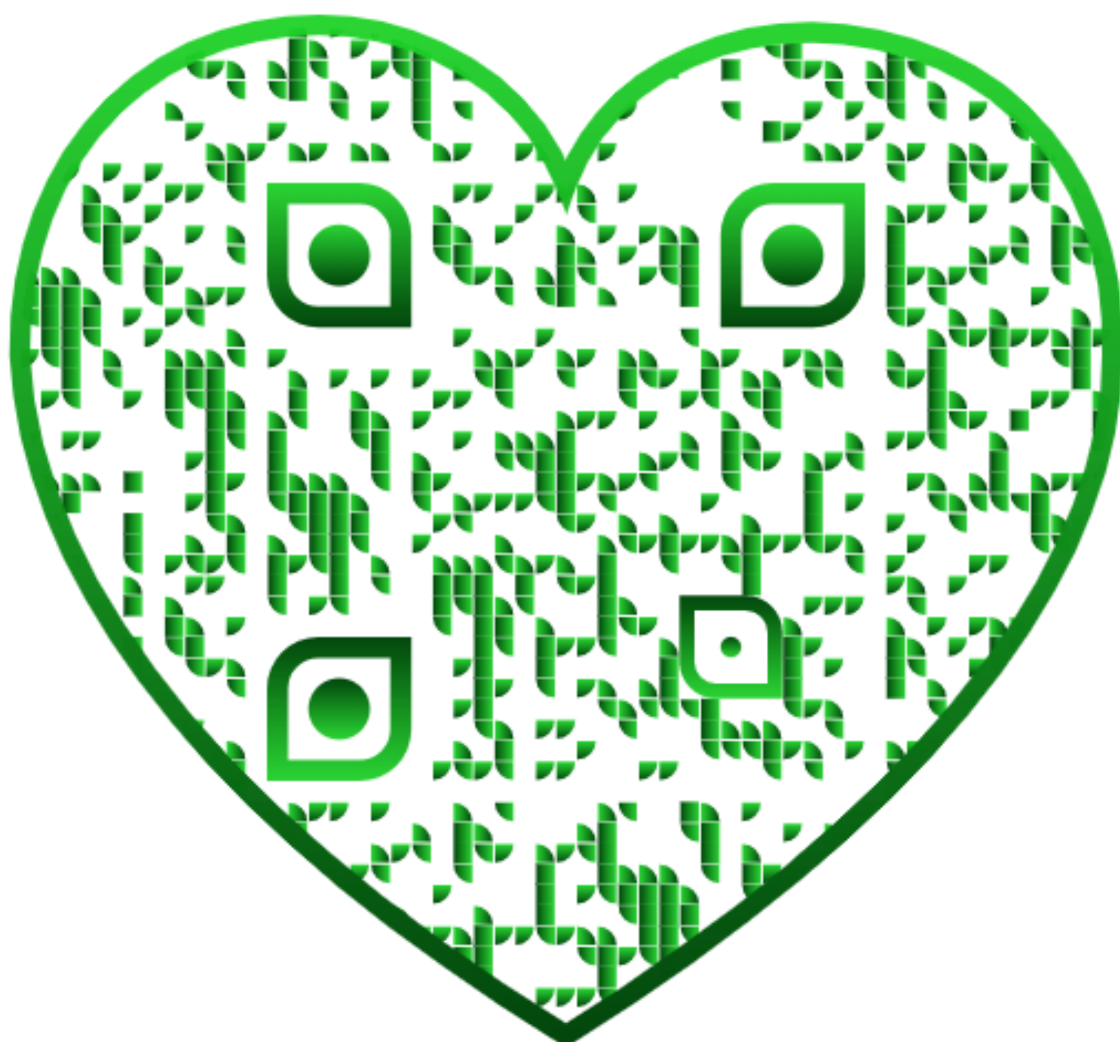
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BLUES MATTERS!

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/OWNER:

Iain Patience:
editor@bluesmatters.com

ALBUM REVIEW EDITOR/OWNER:

Stephen Harrison:
reviews@bluesmatters.com

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES:

ads@bluesmatters.com

DESIGN & WEBSITE MANAGER:

design@bluesmatters.com

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Contributing Writers:

John Angus	Barry Hopwood	Iain Patience
Adrian Blacklee	Andy Hughes	Graeme Scott
Colin Campbell	Adam Kennedy	Andy Snipper
Laura Carbone	Jean Knappitt	Dani Wilde
Norman Darwen	Brian Kramer	Steve Yourglivch
Paul Davies	Paul Long	Abbe Sparks
Dave Drury	Ben McNair	
Stephen Harrison	David Osler	

Contributing Photographers:

Arnie Goodman
Adam Kennedy
Laura Carbone
Rob Blackham
Denis Carpentier
Ian Potter
plus others credited on page

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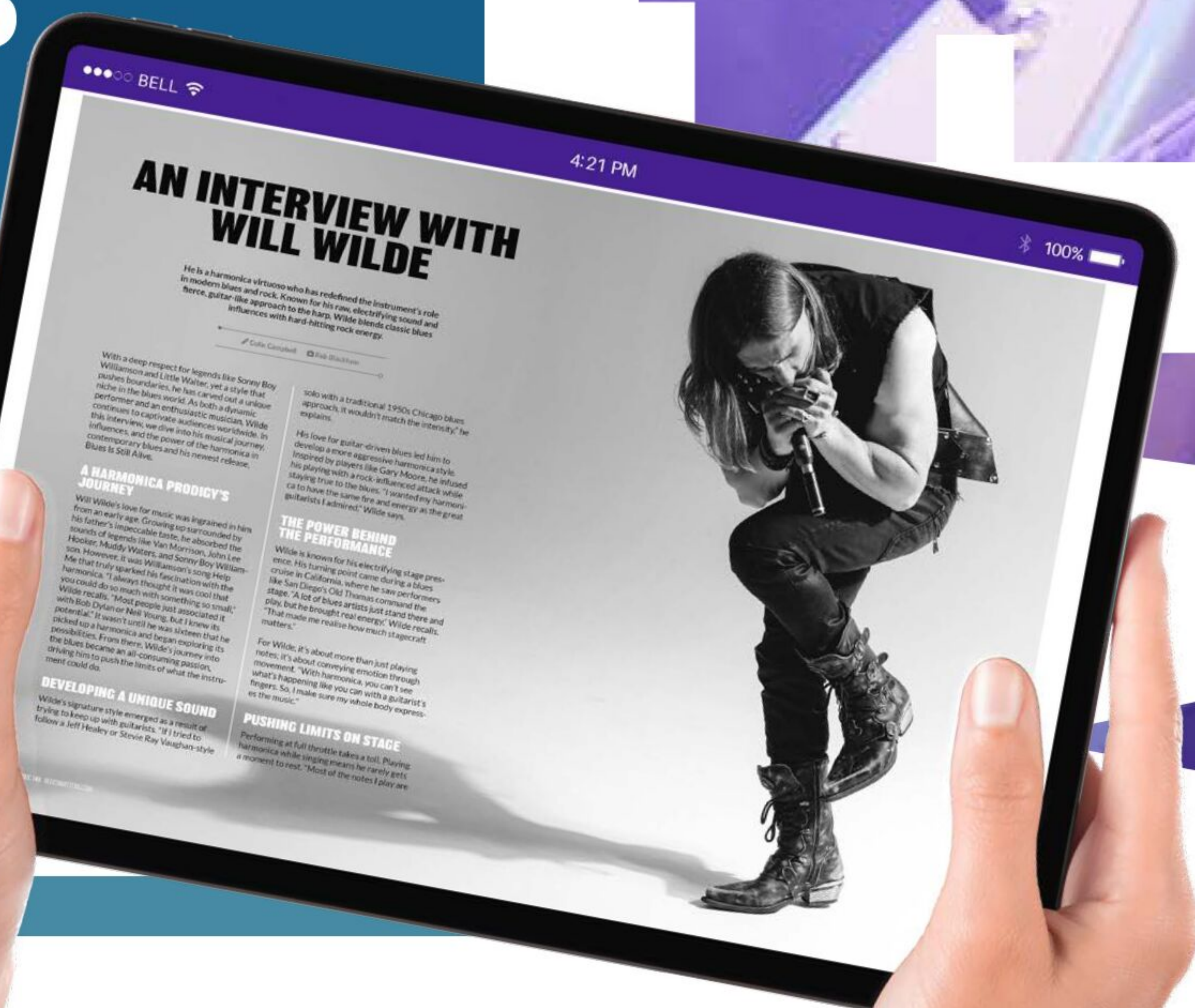
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THE MEDICINE

When Blues Matters caught up with Miss Emily, she was relaxing at home in Kingston, Ontario, reflecting on her long, soulful journey through music. “I grew up in a very musical family; we went to church on Sundays, and there was always music at family gatherings. My parents had a great record collection, lots of old soul, so I was lucky to have that as a foundation.”

✎ Colin Campbell 📷 As credited

Born in 1981, Emily jokes that the '80s were “the poorest decade for music,” at least to her taste. She gravitated toward the timeless greats – Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, and Aretha Franklin – and found her biggest revelation when she discovered her mother’s worn cassette of Carole King’s Tapestry. “That record changed everything for me. Carole wrote all the songs, played piano, and sang them. For a young woman discovering her voice, that was huge.”

FINDING HER SOUND

Emily took piano and voice lessons through school and, like many teenagers in the '90s, picked up a guitar “because Nirvana was cool.” By her late teens, she was performing in Kingston bars every weekend. “I realised I could make a living doing this. The bars were raw and real – that’s where I learned to book myself, run a business, and connect with people. Twenty-one years later, I’m still doing it full-time.”

Her sound defies a single label. “I say soul, blues, Americana. Deep soul and gospel are at the root of everything I do – it’s how I sing and how I feel. When I was young, people told me I had to choose a genre, but I never fit neatly into one box. Put saxophones on a song and it’s soul; put banjo on it and it’s Americana. I’m fine being a little loose with that.”

WORKING WITH COLIN LINDEN

Emily’s latest album, The Medicine, marks a milestone collaboration with Grammy-winning producer and guitarist Colin Linden. “We first met at the Canadian Blues Awards in 2020,” she recalls. “We kept in touch through the pandemic, co-writing by sending voice

memos back and forth. Eventually, we decided to make a record together.”

Recorded in Nashville, the project was funded through a Kickstarter campaign and Emily’s own savings after years of frustrating grant applications. “I waited three years for funding that never came. Finally, I thought, I’ll just make it happen. Colin brought together a beautiful group of musicians and helped create something really organic and special. You can hear his touch all over it.”

THE SONGS AND THE STORIES

Every track on The Medicine carries its own emotional pulse. “My Freedom started out angry,” she says. “It was about an abusive relationship I went through in my twenties, but I didn’t want to stay in that darkness. I wanted to make something hopeful – to show you can come through it.”

Another highlight is Stand Together, Band Together. “That one’s about community. It’s the only song I actually listen to in the car! When everyone sings together – no matter their background or beliefs – it’s spiritual. That’s the beauty of live music.”

The title track, The Medicine, came from a deeply personal place. “A family member asked me to write about a young woman who died from an overdose. At first, I said no, but one night the lyrics came to me in a rush. Sometimes songs are gifts – they come through you.” Nashville pianist



MASS EALLY

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 **YOUTUBE**

 Jillian Lorraine

A black and white photograph of a woman with long, light-colored hair, looking slightly upwards and to the right. She is wearing a dark, textured jacket over a light-colored top. Her right hand is resting on a vintage-style microphone with a mesh grille. The background is dark. A quote is overlaid on the right side of the image.

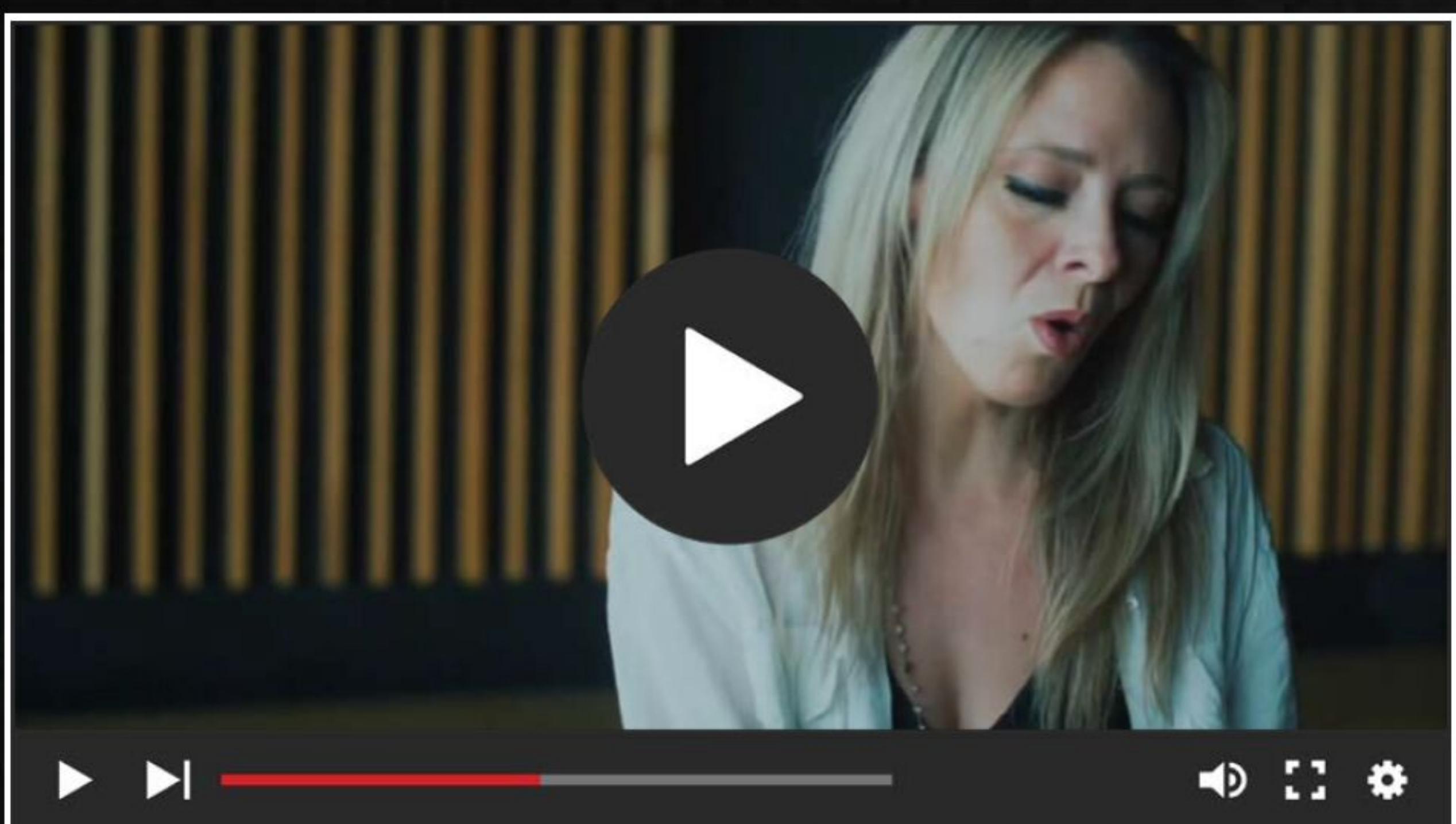
*“The guy I wrote
it about, I used to
call him Peter Pan
because he lived in
Neverland”*



Michael Hicks brought a soulful depth to the recording. “It’s tough to sing live, but it means so much to people, and that’s why I keep performing it.”

Not all the songs are new. “You May Believe is about 18 years old. I tried to include it on earlier albums, but no one wanted it until Colin heard it and said, ‘That’s a keeper.’ It’s one of those ‘almost love’ songs. The guy I wrote it about, I used to call him Peter Pan because he lived in Neverland.”

Maybe, co-written with Rob Baker of The Tragically Hip, adds a powerful, soulful edge. “Rob and I have been writing together for nearly ten years. It’s passionate and honest, and I was thrilled Colin wanted it on the record.”



FROM THE STUDIO TO THE STAGE

The album was recorded mostly live off the floor. “As we get older, we learn who we are. This record is me being comfortable in my own skin. Less is more. We did it in four or five days, working from noon to six. The McCrary Sisters came in later for harmonies, and Colin handled the overdubs. It was joyful and grounded – like finally exhaling after years of holding your breath.”

Emily’s connection to her audience is as vital as ever. “I love people – that’s why I do this. I need that energy, those smiles, those conversations. Even if I can’t see the crowd, I can feel them. I never stick to a setlist; if the room feels tired, I’ll change the tempo. You play for your audience, not at them.”

STRENGTH, GRATITUDE, AND GROWTH

Miss Emily is candid about her experiences as a woman in music. “I’m a feminist, but I’ve also worked with incredible men. Things are changing. Younger women have boundaries and know their worth. I feel protective of them – they’re sacred. I used to define success as just making a living from art. Now I want Junos, Grammys, tours – all of it. But I also want to do it with integrity.”

Her respect for the blues runs deep. “Blues is Black art. It’s sacred. I don’t claim ownership – I celebrate it. I see myself as a custodian, helping keep the flame alive.”

Outside of music, Emily continues her charity work, from humane societies to Light of Day, which raises funds for Parkinson’s research. “Giving back is part of who I am. If I wasn’t making music, I’d still be helping people somehow.”

As we wrap up, Emily smiles and sums up her philosophy. “I literally wake up every morning and say ‘Yay.’ It’s a reminder that attitude is everything. Life will always change, but if you start the day with a little yay, you’re already halfway there.”

Miss Emily’s new album *The Medicine* is released by Gypsy Soul Records on 7 November and is available from www.themissemily.com

📷 Céline Klein

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Marketing & Distribution Dennis
Chenault

Joplinstreetmusic@hotmail.com
Jayhooksband.net

US Publicity Doug Deutsch
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US Radio Peter Hay peter.hay@twinvision.net





**“Slash made me fall
in love with Gibson
Les Paul guitars”**

TROUBLE COMING AND NO STOPPING

LAURA COX

Laura Cox is an Anglo-French guitarist who has been making serious inroads into the hearts and minds of the Internet generation – but more of that shortly. Right now, she is poised to release her third album and is due to visit the UK next year to bring that record, and plenty more, to a stage near you. BM's Andy Hughes got all the details, starting with her first steps into music.

✎ Andy Hughes 📷 Li Roda-Gil

"When I was a child, my dad used to listen to a lot of old country music and rock. There weren't any musicians in my family, but growing up surrounded by good music definitely helped me develop this passion. The instrument that stood out the most for me was the guitar. The riffs, the solos, the different kinds of tones – everything caught my attention.

It wasn't until I was fifteen that I asked for guitar lessons. I started with classical guitar since those lessons were easier to find, but I quickly switched to electric guitar. It became a real obsession, and I think I knew, deep down, that guitar would become a big part of my life."

INFLUENCES AND HEROES

"All guitarists have influences," Laura continues. "My role models were Slash, Mark Knopfler, and Joe Bonamassa. Through their music, they really helped me become the player I am today, as I spent hours learning their licks and solos.

Slash made me fall in love with Gibson Les Paul guitars. I loved the bursts and their thick tones. Mark Knopfler has a special right-hand technique which I can really identify with because I'm a lefty playing right-handed guitars, just like him. I like his finger-picking style and I find it easier to play this way.

Joe Bonamassa is just technical perfection for me. His playing is subtle, articulate, and fast. I admire the level he managed to reach."

LEFT-HANDED BEGINNINGS

Speaking of being left-handed but playing right-handed, how did that come about?

"When I first picked up a guitar, it was an old classical one from my aunt, and of course it was right-handed. It just felt natural to hold the neck in my left hand and play notes on the fretboard with my main hand.

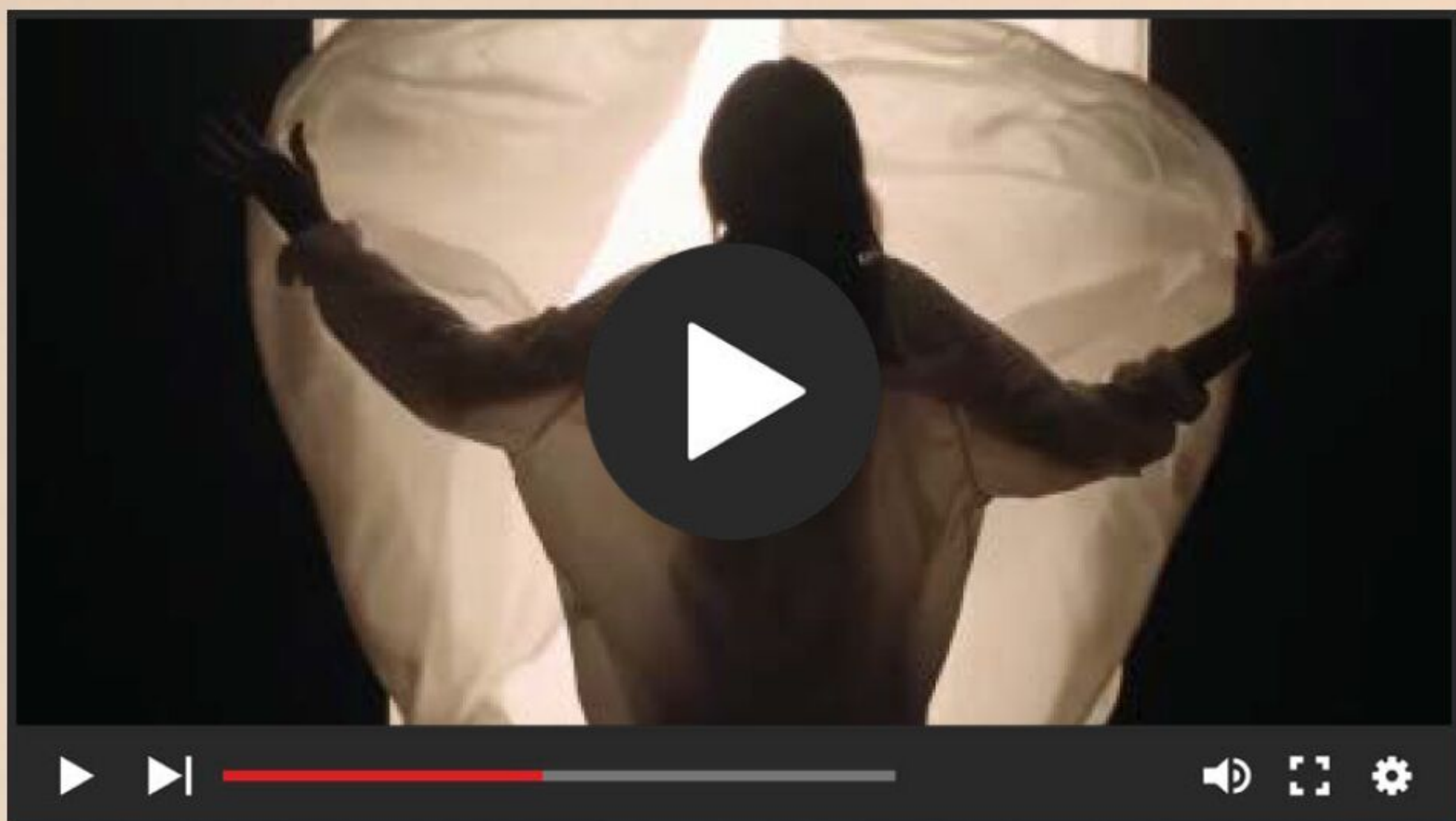
I later realised the right hand is as important as the left, maybe even more, and that perhaps I should have tried the other way. But it's too late now! I know my right hand is lazy and my sense of rhythm can be hesitant, but I've found my own way of playing and I'll keep working on it."

EARLY YOUTUBE SUCCESS

Long before social media became a necessity for artists, Laura was one of the first to see its potential.

"Back in 2008, I'd been playing guitar for a couple of years and spent hours watching YouTubers cover classic rock solos. They motivated me to do the same, so I uploaded some videos. I didn't have a strategy or plan, I just wanted to share my passion and get some feedback.

I think that's why it worked – people could feel it was natural. I wasn't chasing Likes or Views. I just wanted to play."



FINDING AN AUDIENCE ONLINE

With hindsight, it's easy to see how uploading music online can build a following, but Laura insists her motives were artistic, not commercial.

"It was totally unexpected! Even though I'm less active on YouTube now, it helped me start my band, make albums, and tour. I'm so grateful for that because I'm not sure any of it would have happened otherwise.

My plan now is to find the right balance between touring and YouTube. I've focused on the real-life side in recent years, but I don't want to give up on YouTube. Even if I can't compete with today's influencers, I can still come up with cool content."

EXPLORING NEW INSTRUMENTS

Laura's talents extend beyond guitar. "I wouldn't consider myself a banjo player – I'm more a guitar player who plays banjo!" she laughs. "I discovered bluegrass a few years ago and loved the tone and fast rolls.

I also want to play drums more. I started during lockdown just for fun, but now I'd like to take it further and maybe even play a bit on stage. I love that feeling of learning something from zero – it's exciting and motivating. Living in an apartment doesn't make it easy though!"



WRITING IN PORTUGAL

During lockdown, Laura relocated to Portugal to work on her latest album, *Trouble Coming*.

"I didn't want to stay in Paris and celebrate my thirtieth birthday alone! In Portugal, life was peaceful near the ocean, and I found inspiration there. I recorded the demos and sent the files to my band back in France.

Eventually, we gathered in Brussels to record the album in the old-fashioned way, together in the studio."

FEEDBACK AND COLLABORATION

"For this new album, the first person who heard most of the songs was my girlfriend. She listened to my demos and gave me honest feedback before I worked on them with the producers. I also trust my manager completely – he listens closely and tells me what could be improved.

It feels good to have people who'll tell me the truth. It's safe and motivating to work that way. And when we disagree, I know when to follow my instincts, even if it doesn't seem like the most convincing choice at first."

TROUBLE COMING

As the release date approaches, Laura is filled with anticipation.

"This album already feels old in my head! I've listened to it so many times to make sure everything fits and sounds right. In a way, the release is a happy relief. It's like my job is done and I'm handing it to the world.

I hope it finds a place in people's lives and that they can identify with it the way I did when I wrote it. For me, *Trouble Coming* is a turning point in my career. I don't know where it will lead, but I can't wait for the journey."

LIFE ON STAGE

With the album ready to go, Laura is thrilled to take it on the road.

"It feels great to change the setlist more often now that new songs are coming. I recognise myself more in these recent compositions, and I think the audience can see I'm having fun.



For a long time, being on stage wasn't natural for me. As an introvert, I didn't know how to move or what to do with my body. Tour after tour, I feel more comfortable, like I finally belong there. Playing live is all about connection – with my instruments, my band, and the fans."

LOOKING AHEAD

"I want to keep writing and releasing songs before the next album. Trouble Coming put me in a good creative mind-set and I don't want to lose it. I used to wait until I had an album planned to start creating, but that adds unnecessary pressure. Now I prefer to write without a specific goal – when the time comes, I'll already have enough material ready."

And there's plenty ahead for fans. "Next year will be full of concerts! We have a German tour, some French dates, and I just heard a UK tour is confirmed for May 2026. I can't wait to come back to the UK – the last time was in 2019, before my albums were even distributed there. It's going to be a challenge, but I'm ready for it."

I also want to collaborate with other bands I love, both online and in the studio. That's been on my mind for a while, and it'll be a priority next year."

BM will be there – and we suspect we won't be alone.

Laura Cox's new album "Trouble Coming" is released by earMUSIC/VeryRecords on Friday October 31st. The album is available from www.earmusic.com and www.lauracoxmusic.com

Laura embarks on a UK tour from May 4-10, 2026. Tickets are available at www.alttickets.com/laura-cox-tickets

EXPLORE





Photo: Eric Fingal 6-20-25

LUCK, LOVE AND THE BLUES



Meet **The Lucky Losers**, the Bay Area band that's all about heart, soul, and a whole lot of groove. Led by the powerhouse duo of Cathy Lemons and Phil Berkowitz, they mix blues, soul, and vintage vibes into a sound that feels both fresh and timeless. Whether they're trading vocals, swapping stories, or laying down a harmonica line that cuts straight to the bone.

✎ Colin Campbell 📷 Eric Fingal

Naming The Band

"It's from a James Carr song, 'Lucky Loser.' He's one of the greatest soul singers ever, though a lot of people don't know him. I discovered him back in 2008 at a swing night in San Francisco, and when I heard that song, it really stuck with me. The idea is that we may both be losers in life sometimes, but together, we can be lucky. That's the whole concept of the name."

Phil smiled as Cathy told the story, and together they stressed that the name reflects more than just a clever title, it's a mission statement.

"It's about resilience," Cathy explained. "Even if you've been knocked down, you can still find your luck with the right partner beside you."

Protecting the Name

Interestingly, the duo had to take steps to make sure The Lucky Losers stayed their name. Cathy admitted her father, a Depression-era lawyer, wasn't so sure about it at first: "He said, 'Why are you calling yourself The Lucky Losers? That's a terrible name!' But now, people are starting to use it everywhere. Even within the blues community, we've encountered bands trying to call themselves the same thing. So, we've trademarked it it's ours. We're proud of that."

Two Different Roads, One Destination

"It's not actually that different. He's from New Jersey, I'm from Texas, but we have exactly the same taste in music. That was the big surprise when I first met Phil."

The story of their meeting could have come out of a classic blues ballad. Cathy was playing a long-running gig at The Saloon in San Francisco with guitarist David Workman. Phil walked in one night, tall and charismatic, with a harmonica case in hand. Cathy remembers her first impression vividly:

"I thought he was cute. He asked me to sing in his show, and I said no at first – I'd just gone through a divorce and didn't want to get involved with anyone. But fate had other plans."

Music, of course, did the matchmaking. Their shared love of blues, soul, and swing pulled them closer until it became clear they had something rare: chemistry both on and off stage.

Cathy's Journey: From Swing Roots to the Blues

When Cathy Lemons speaks about her musical life, she does so with a mix of gratitude and grit. Her story stretches back to Dallas, Texas, where she began singing at just 17 in an American Roots swing band called Man Bites Dog. That band may have left no recordings behind, but it set the tone for a career that would carry her through both triumph and turbulence.

Her first deep encounter with the blues came when she heard Anson Funderburgh play. "I was thunderstruck," she recalls, describing the sound that lit a fire under her. From there, Cathy landed regular gigs, even recording with Funderburgh in what would become a treasured set of tracks known as Last Take.

But her path wasn't straightforward. Cathy is candid about the struggles of her youth: addiction, instability, and family challenges. "I moved 14 times. It took years of therapy and treatment to get better," she explains. Despite those hurdles, her voice remained a constant — a lifeline that brought her back. She went on to record with bassist Johnny Ace for nearly two decades, releasing the acclaimed Lemonace album, before striking out on her own with albums like Black Crow.

A New Chapter with Phil

By the time she met Phil Berkowitz, Cathy was wary of new relationships, personally and musically. Yet there

was something undeniable about their connection. “I thought he was cute right away,” she admits with a laugh. What sealed the deal, though, was their shared love of music. “We found 20 songs in common on our set lists. it was fate.”

Phil’s Path: From Harmonica to the Blues Stage

Phil grew up in suburban New Jersey, where music was more of a fascination than a career plan. After his mother’s passing when he was just ten, he drifted through adolescence, clinging to the sounds of Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, and Otis Redding. Blues entered his life through the power of artists like Freddie King and eventually, Phil decided to chase it himself.

“I put an ad in the paper for a blues band,” he laughs. “I couldn’t play my way out of a paper bag back then, but I was determined.” Hustling hard, Phil built his chops through relentless gigging, organising benefit shows such as Blues for a Cure, and sharing stages with the likes of Rick Estrin, Irma Thomas, and Elvin Bishop. Later, he spent time with guitarist Sean Carney and developed a reputation for energetic, heartfelt shows, including popular Louis Jordan tributes in Berkeley.

A Vocal Band First

When Cathy and Phil joined forces as The Lucky Losers, the focus became crystal clear it was in the vocals. “We are a vocal band,” Cathy emphasises. “It’s about the blend of our voices.” That blend didn’t come easy they worked tirelessly with vocal coach Raz Kennedy to refine their harmonies until they became the duo’s signature. Phil’s unusual vocal range, stretching from bass to soaring highs, pairs with Cathy’s soulful timbre in ways that set them apart. “There’s something about the way we listen to each other,” Cathy explains. “If he leads, I step back, and vice versa. It’s a conversation in song.”



The New Album: Arrival

The Lucky Losers’ latest album, *Arrival*, is produced by Kid Andersen, the record features 11 original tracks, split between Cathy and Phil’s songwriting. “We thought like DJs this time,” Cathy says. “Every track counts, no nine-minute jams.”

The new record isn’t just about love songs. Cathy and Phil dig deep into the challenges of modern life. One standout track, *I Believe Her*, addresses abuse and the courage of women speaking out. Cathy, a survivor herself, delivers the message with raw honesty: “You cannot shut us up,” she declares.

Another track, *S-C-A-M*, tackles the plague of fraud that Americans face daily. “Everybody’s being scammed, calls, texts, emails. I was scammed myself,” Cathy says. Inspired partly by a movie about an elderly woman who hunts down her scammer, Cathy turned outrage into art. “Maybe we should’ve called it *Scum*,” she laughs.

Phil’s songwriting contributions come from long walks by the San Francisco coast. *Sorry Brother* and *Sunday Stroller* both grew from those meditative hikes. “It takes me about five miles before the ideas start flowing,” he explains. Musically, he tailors songs to the talents of their band, including drummer John Otis, son of the legendary Johnny Otis. *Pull On The Rope* sums up that philosophy: a call to unity in a divided world. “If we don’t work together, we’re all going to fail,” Cathy sings. It’s a message born from hardship, carried by harmony, and delivered with the passion that only true blues survivors can bring.

The band surrounding them is formidable: Simon Goulbon Smith on guitar, John Otis (son of Johnny Otis) on drums, Edgar Son Gabriel on bass, and horns courtesy of Mike Renta, Doug James, and John Gottlieb. With Andersen himself adding guitar, bass, keyboards, and percussion, the album is layered with richness while staying rooted in the duo’s vocal interplay.

Songwriting and Storytelling

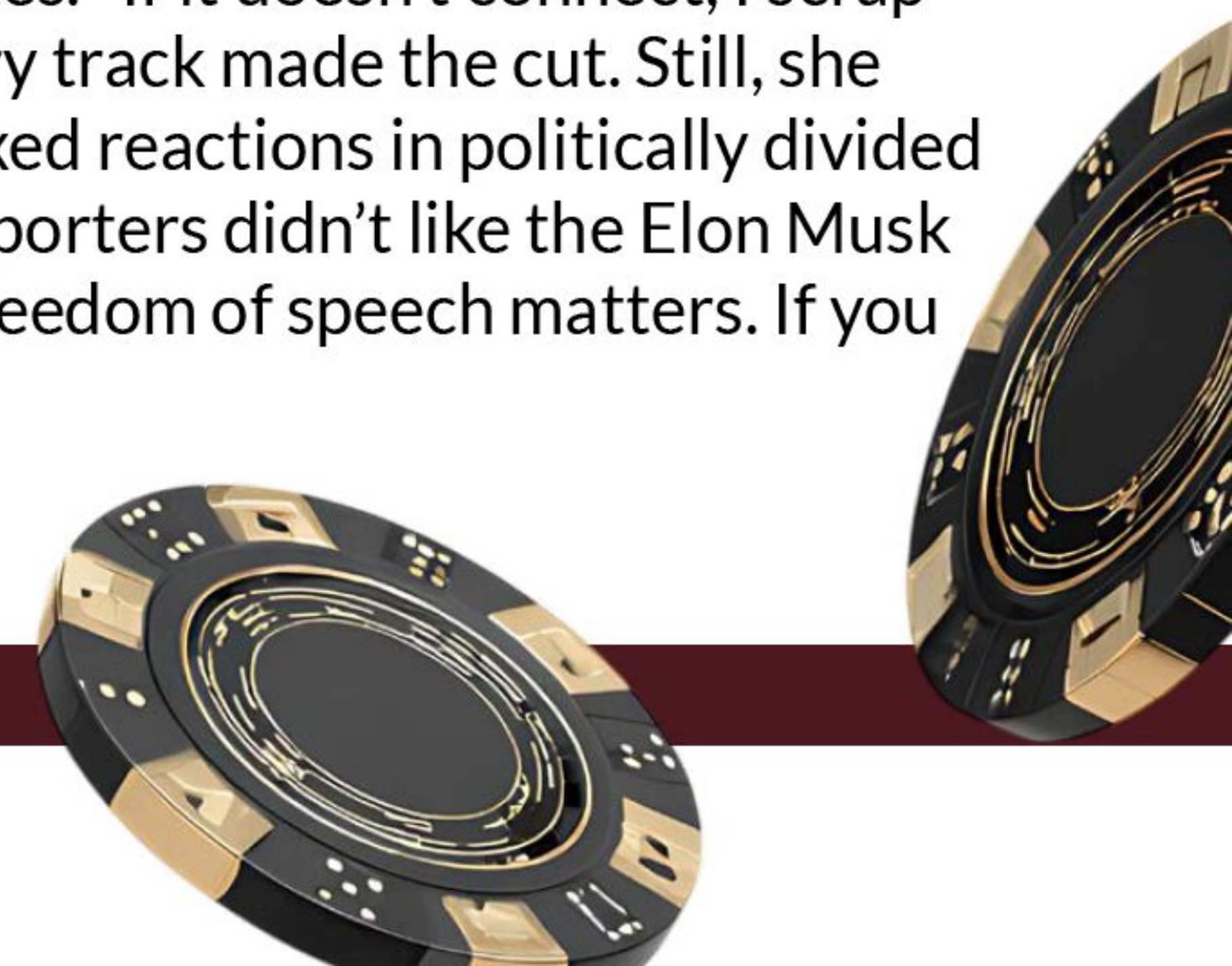
Their writing process is as distinct as their voices. Phil finds inspiration on his daily hikes by the San Francisco coast, recording lyrical snippets before shaping them into songs with guitarist Danny Caron. Cathy’s approach is more direct. “I can write fast, I’ll find a groove maybe Mavis Staples or some unknown roots track on Spotify and boom, I’ve got a song.”

On the Road and Beyond

Fresh from a gruelling 12-date run across the U.S., the Lucky Losers remain energised by the connection with their audiences. “We’re exhausted, but when the crowd gets it, when they really hear us, it’s all worth it,” Cathy smiles.

Road-Tested Blues

The duo recently tested their new material on a 12-date tour of the Northeast. “I can always tell if a song works by the audience,” Cathy notes. “If it doesn’t connect, I scrap it.” This time, nearly every track made the cut. Still, she admits *S-C-A-M* gets mixed reactions in politically divided areas. “Some Trump supporters didn’t like the Elon Musk lyric,” she shrugs. “But freedom of speech matters. If you





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 **SPOTIFY**

don't like what I say, you don't have to listen but don't silence me."

Tales from the Road

Life on the road with The Lucky Losers is never dull. Cathy recalls near-disasters, like hitting a cow in Nevada that crushed their van, forcing the band to finish the trip in a U-Haul. More recently, she had to evict a scammer house-sitter from her San Francisco home with the help of a vigilant ex-Marine neighbour. "Scams are everywhere," she sighs.

Then there was the bandmate who cracked under tour pressure. "He kept changing his mind, I'm going home, I'll stick it out. Finally, I picked him up, put him in the van, and he ran out like a little rat," Cathy laughs. The ordeal inspired their song *Leave You on the Side of the Road*. (Godless Land 2020)

Blues at the Core

Despite eclectic influences, swing, rock, soul, Cathy, and Phil insist the blues is their foundation. "Blues is the father and mother of it all, it's the groove, the truth-telling. We're just embellishing in that tradition. Don't be afraid to write your own songs," Cathy advises younger musicians. "Tell your truth. Blues needs new stories, not just 1950s shuffles."

What Success Means

For The Lucky Losers, success isn't about charts or awards, it's about connection. Cathy puts it simply: "Success is knowing what you're capable of and doing it consistently. For me, it's when a song makes someone say, 'That's exactly how I feel.'"

Looking Ahead

As the conversation wound down, one thing was clear, The Lucky Losers are more than just a band. They're a partnership forged in music, luck, and a little bit of loss. Cathy summed it up beautifully. "We're survivors, and we put that into the music. That's what makes us lucky – turning life's hard knocks into songs that people can connect with."

As Phil reflects: "We're just two people, trying to create our own path like everyone else. Struggling along but doing it together."

For further information see website:
www.theluckylosers.com

EXPLORE





TELL YOUR GHOST

LEILANI KILGORE

When it comes to the new generation carrying the blues torch, few shine as brightly as Leilani Kilgore. With a voice that channels the soul of the Delta and a songwriting style steeped in raw emotion and truth, Kilgore bridges timeless blues tradition with a modern edge.

✎ Colin Campbell

📷 Supplied

Whether delivering a smoky ballad or a fiery electric groove, her music speaks of struggle, resilience, and redemption. Blues Matters caught up with her to discuss her roots, creative journey, and new release, *Tell Your Ghost*.

A MUSICAL UPBRINGING

"My parents aren't musicians, but they're lifelong music fans," she says. "Their first date was a Rolling Stones show on Halloween. I grew up thinking guitar players were the coolest people alive." Her childhood soundtrack ranged from The Stones and B.B. King to Santana, The Doors, and Tom Waits. "I'd call local radio and sing lyrics down the phone because I didn't know the song titles," she laughs.

LESSONS IN THE BLUES

After high school, Kilgore attended Berklee College of Music, but soon found the academic world restrictive. "After two years, I hit a wall. I could stay and finish, but I might never want to play again. So I dropped out and got back to performing. I studied Blind Willie Johnson, Jeff Beck, the Allman Brothers — anything that inspired me. I took what felt right and built my career from there."

FINDING HER SOUND

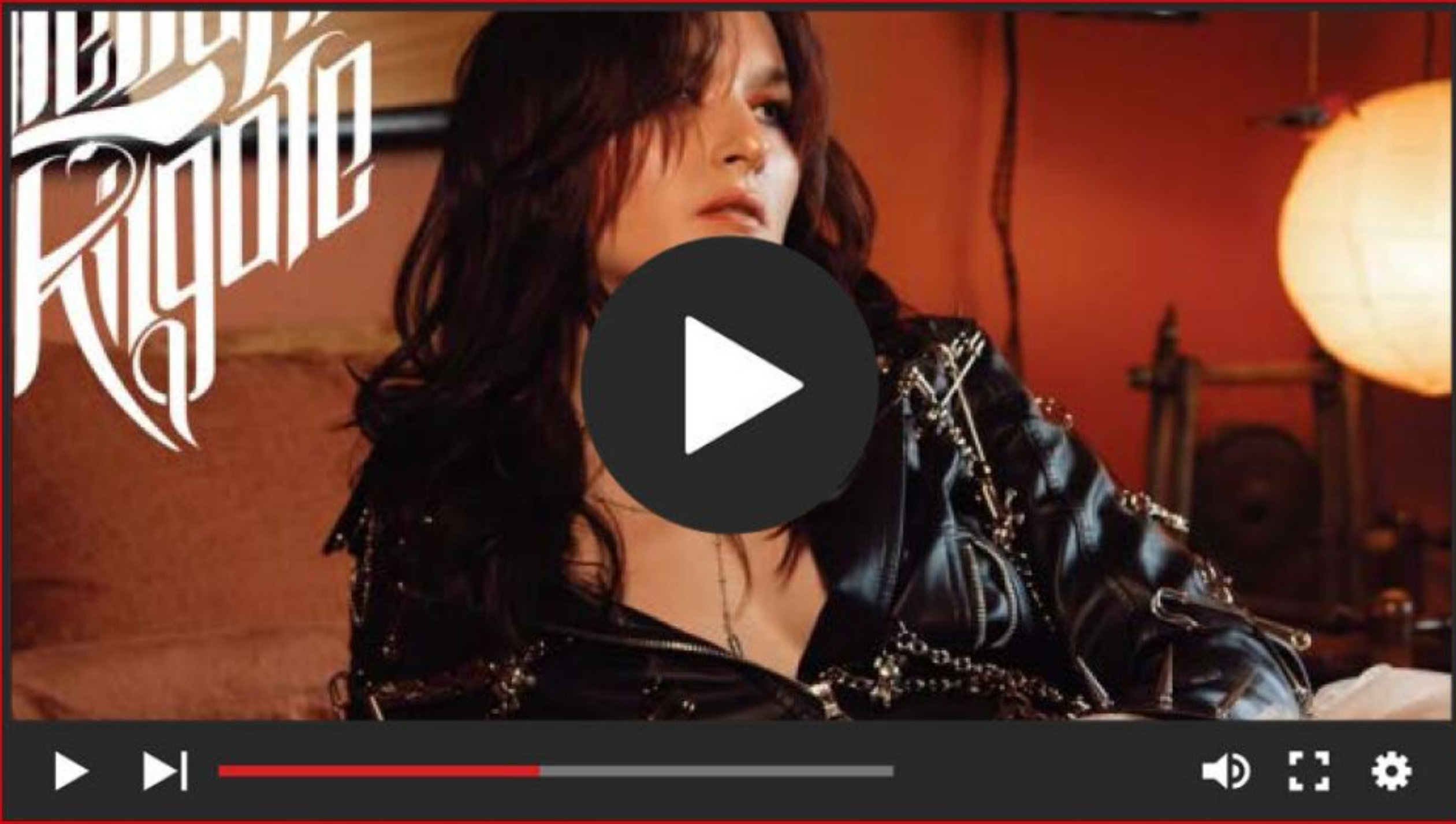
Her first band, Wolfe and the Vampires, formed in high school. "We played pop-punk covers and even Johnny B. Goode. I was 13, young, and dumb, but it was fun." Later, she found her balance between rock and blues. "I finally realised I'm a rock artist with strong blues influences. It's in everything I do, especially my solos."

THE MEANING OF THE BLUES

"It means everything to me," she says. "You can hear someone's whole personality in their playing — Gary Moore, Rory Gallagher, B.B. King, Stevie Ray Vaughan. Blues isn't sad; it's the most beautiful expression of the human experience on six strings. Our next record goes right back to those roots. I can't cut it out of my music — it's who I am."

FROM CALIFORNIA TO NASHVILLE

Leilani's musical path began early, performing in a classic rock cover band and running a blues jam in San Diego at just fifteen. "Nobody ever showed up, but it was great practice," she laughs. "When I was 20, I packed up my car and drove to Nashville. It was terrifying, but the best decision I've ever made."



Her first Nashville experience had already left an impression. “I sat in at Bourbon Street Blues Club — that moment made me think I could belong here someday.” After moving in 2017, she threw herself into gigging. “At first, I was playing blues covers, figuring out venues and my sound.”

SONGWRITING AND IDENTITY

“I always wrote songs but didn’t take it seriously for years,” she admits. “I loved both blues and rock but felt a responsibility to stay traditional. Then I joined a cruise ship cover band, performing five days a week. When COVID hit, I finally had time to think. That’s when I realised it was time to find my own sound.”

Her early single I Wanna Be Your Joan Jett was followed by Triple X Moonshine, marking her breakthrough. When her management split in 2024, it sparked a creative rebirth. “I started writing freely — no formula, no boundaries. It became how I processed everything I was feeling.”

TELL YOUR GHOST

That process became the foundation of Tell Your Ghost. “It’s the most honest thing I’ve ever done. It’s blues, it’s rock, it’s raw emotion. I stopped worrying about fitting in a box and just wrote what felt real. Without realising it, these songs saved my life.”

THE CRAFT OF SONGWRITING

“I’m not methodical. I wait for inspiration to hit. If it flows easily, it’s probably honest.” Her song High Low, which opens the album, began with a guitar riff. “I love writing over a tone that moves me emotionally.”

INFLUENCE AND COLLABORATION

Leilani’s influences span from Rory Gallagher to Tom Waits. “Waits has such a unique way of writing — that drama and theatricality really shaped me.”

Her track Spanish Moss, co-written with longtime guitarist John Wise Carver, came together almost by accident. “He cornered me when I was hungover and played this riff. Within an hour we had the song. It’s about the Louisiana–Mississippi region — the air feels thicker, almost alive.”

LOOKING AHEAD

With one record out and another on the horizon, Kilgore stands taller than ever — confident, creative, and in control. “These songs saved me,” she reflects. “They helped me find my voice again. Now I get to share that with people, and that’s all I ever wanted.”

AUTHENTICITY ABOVE ALL

“I never want to write something that doesn’t feel true,” she says. “Even when I’m experimenting with new sounds, the emotion has to be real. That’s what keeps the music alive.”

For more information visit leilanyakilgore.com

EXPLORE





***“It’s the most honest
thing I’ve ever done.
It’s blues, it’s rock,
it’s raw emotion.”***

LISTEN 
TO THIS INTERVIEW



YOUTUBE

ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW & THE LOW RIDERS

by Iain Patience

photos by Steve Russell and James Corns

AFL is little short of a legend these days. He's played with virtually everyone of note in the course of a sixty-year professional career. From 1960s frontman pop star with Amen Corner to touring picker with Eric Clapton for around twenty years, his sheer professionalism always shines brightly.

A Welshman, AFL. Took his touring band to a near-local venue in Brecon, an intimate setting which he knows and appreciates. With his usual band featuring Ian Jennings on upright bass and bass guitar; Nick Pentelow on clarinet & sax; Peter Cook, baritone sax; Paul Beavis, drums and Richard Milner on keys, he delivers a full-throated, live sound that worked perfectly in the intimate setting.

Material ranged across his musical lifetime including his old popster days with Bend Me, Shape Me and Paradise, is Half as Nice both having an unusual early airing as the set kicked-off, to be followed by tracks from his recent albums, Flang Dang – a recording with him playing all instruments himself – and his current, blues chart -topper The Invisible Bluesman. One of his earliest songs, Gin House Blues got a superb feature with AFL cranking the pace with his Fender guitar. Old favourite, a surprise 1970s hit, Wide eyed & Legless features and a great take on John Lennon's One After 909 and Route 66 all added to the fun and ensured a happy, contented crowd left the theatre feeling satisfied.

Overall, this was very much a typical AFL & Low Riders outing with great musicianship, a cheeky wit and some wonderful material. The tour continues UK-wide and is a must-see gig for all lovers of good old-fashioned quality live music.



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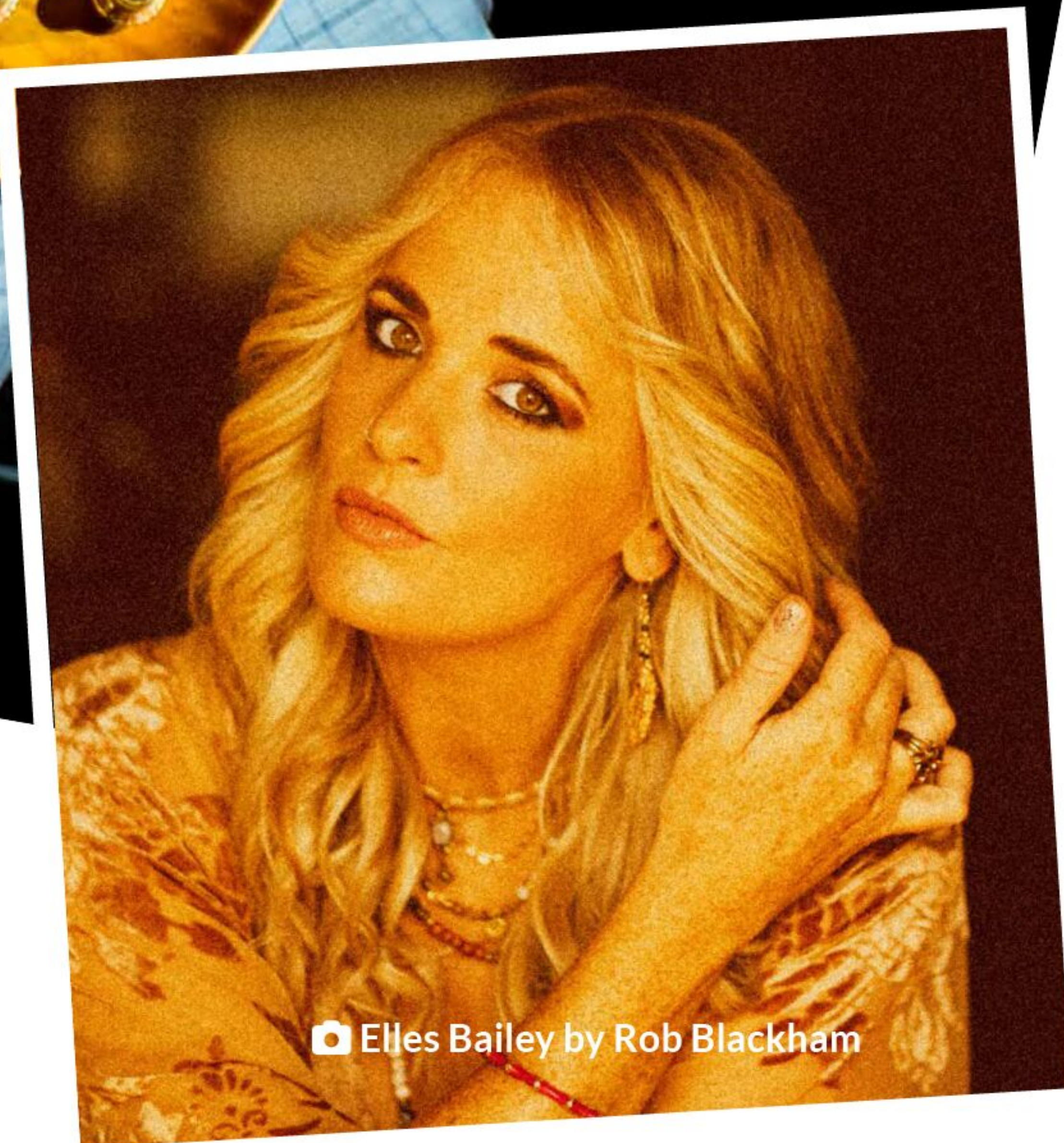
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📷 Joe Bonamassa by Laurence Harvey



Katie Bradley



📷 Elles Bailey by Rob Blackham

WITH A LITTLE HELP FOR MATT

Fiona Long speaks with Blues Matters about a love-filled tribute to her son, the late Matt Long of Catfish. What began as a single-track idea has become a full double album titled *With A Little Help From My Friends*, featuring sixteen performances from a who's who of the blues and blues rock community, all celebrating Matt's songs and spirit.

Stephen Harrison As credited

HOW IT BEGAN

In the weeks after Matt passed, family friend Dudley Ross reached out with a suggestion. Through his connection to Josh Smith, he could help invite Joe Bonamassa to contribute a guitar solo in Matt's honour. Joe said yes. That single spark quickly grew as Fiona began inviting more of Matt's friends and admirers. One by one, they all agreed.

A STELLAR CAST

The line-up reads like a festival poster. Alongside Joe Bonamassa and Walter Trout, you will hear Elles Bailey, The Cinelli Brothers, Blue Nation, Sean Webster, When Rivers Meet, Brave Rival, Will Wilde, Zach Schulz, Alice Armstrong, Dom Martin, Chantel McGregor, Katie Bradley, and Adrian Cowan of Avantasia. Two of Matt's ACM tutors, Nick Meyer and Nat Martin, also add guitar cameos. It is a family of artists united by friendship and respect for Matt's writing and playing.

Notably, Matt's original vocal remains on the tracks with Joe and Walter. He never got to share a stage with Joe, but on this record, he is right there with him.

MATT'S MUSIC AT THE CENTRE

Every track is drawn from Matt's own catalogue, spanning Catfish and his heavier project, Matt Long and the Revenant Ones. The lone exception is the title track, *With A Little Help From My Friends*, captured live at The Stables during a benefit show for Matt. That roof-raising finale, featuring Brave Rival, Will Wilde, and The Cinelli Brothers, provides the album's emotional bookend.

Curation was collaborative. Fiona guided choices to

match each artist's voice with the right song, while leaving room for personal interpretation. One standout sees Dom Martin transform a fierce Revenant Ones thrash into a bare-bones acoustic performance that spotlights the lyric and reveals the strength of the writing.

RECORDED EVERYWHERE, FINISHED WITH CARE

Sessions happened wherever artists could make them: at home, in local rooms, and at trusted studios. Dan Lucas of Joplin House Studios in Kent opened his doors and mixed the majority of the album, bringing the necessary punch for the rock-leaning material. Additional mixes came from Fiona's husband, Paul Long, ensuring the whole set sits together with quality and warmth.

GIVING BACK IN MATT'S NAME

All profits, after costs, will be donated to the hospital cancer unit that cared for Matt. The family has already provided a handheld scanner to improve bedside care, a small device with a big impact on patient comfort. In Matt's musical home, ACM Guildford, a scholarship in his name is now supporting new talent. Fiona's guiding principle is simple: do the things Matt would have approved of.

VINYL, ARTWORK, AND ALL THE TRIMMINGS

With A Little Help From My Friends will be released as a double CD, double vinyl, and download. Alice Armstrong is creating the artwork, with a gatefold design that brings back the joy of sleeve notes, photos, and

“All profits will go to the cancer unit that cared for Matt.”



HEART ATTACK
FIVE YEARS ON
LONG TIME
BAD CAGES
STAND UP



lyrics you can pore over.

KEY DATES

- Pre-release: 7 November on what would have been Matt's birthday
- Album release: 20 March

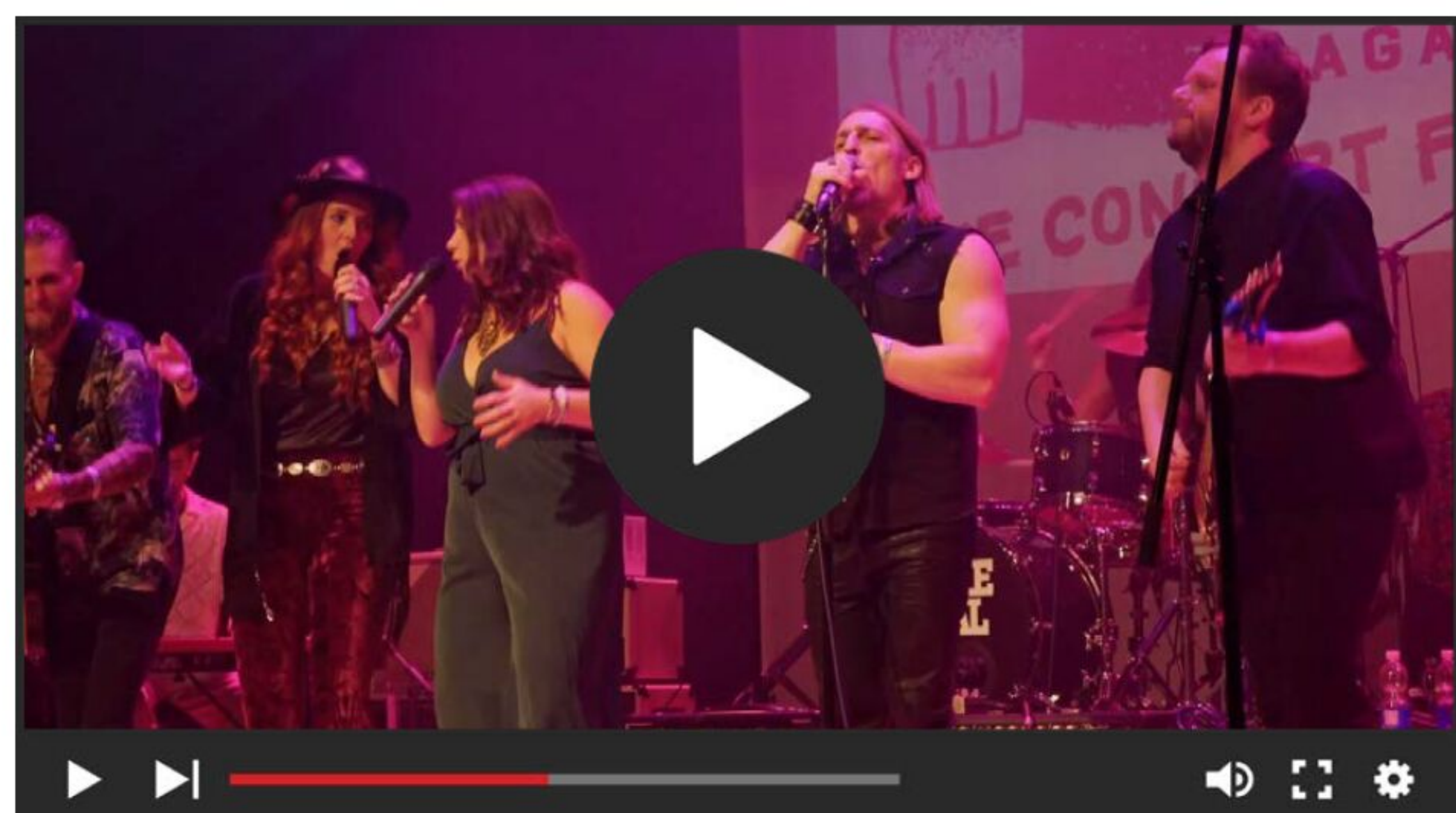
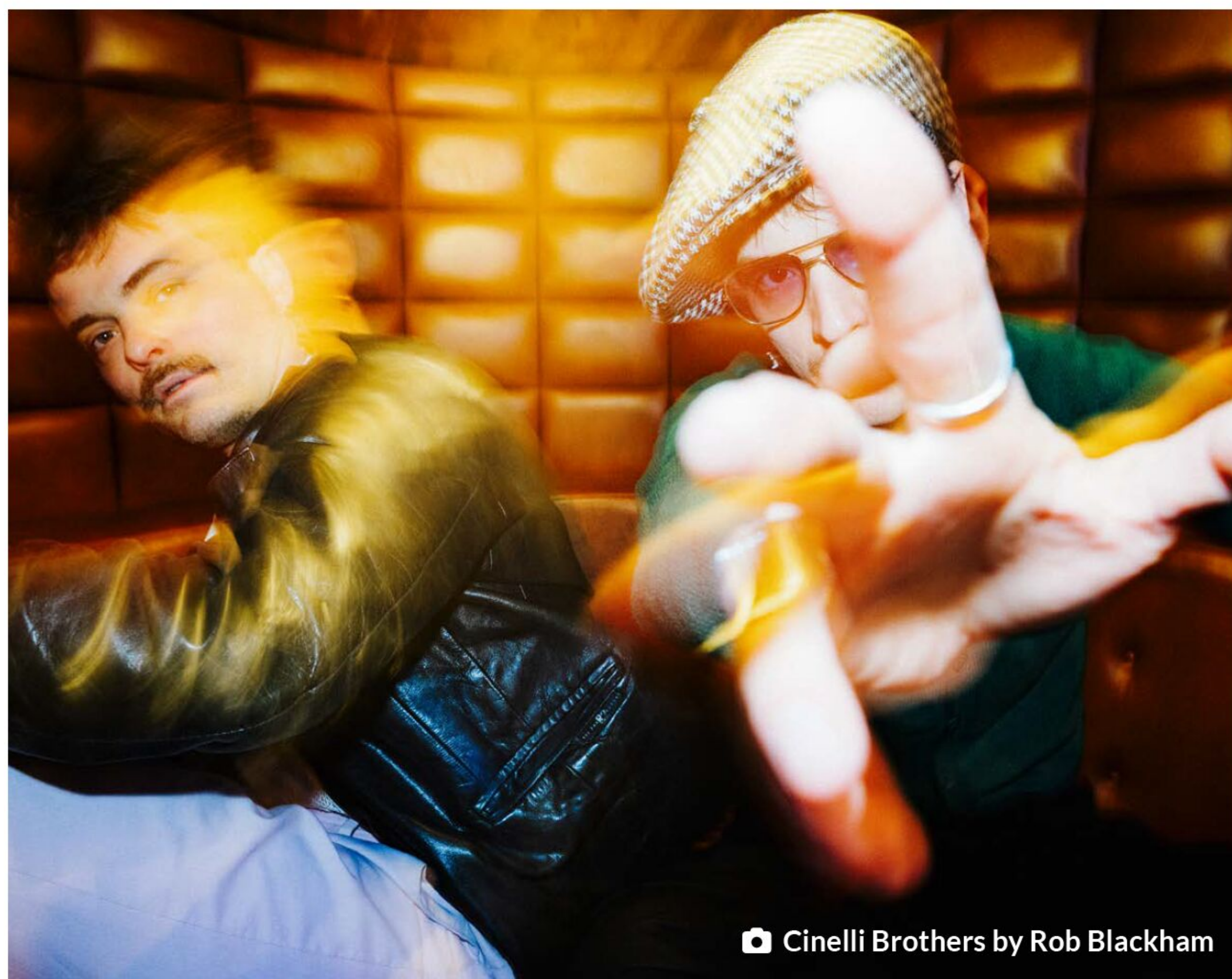
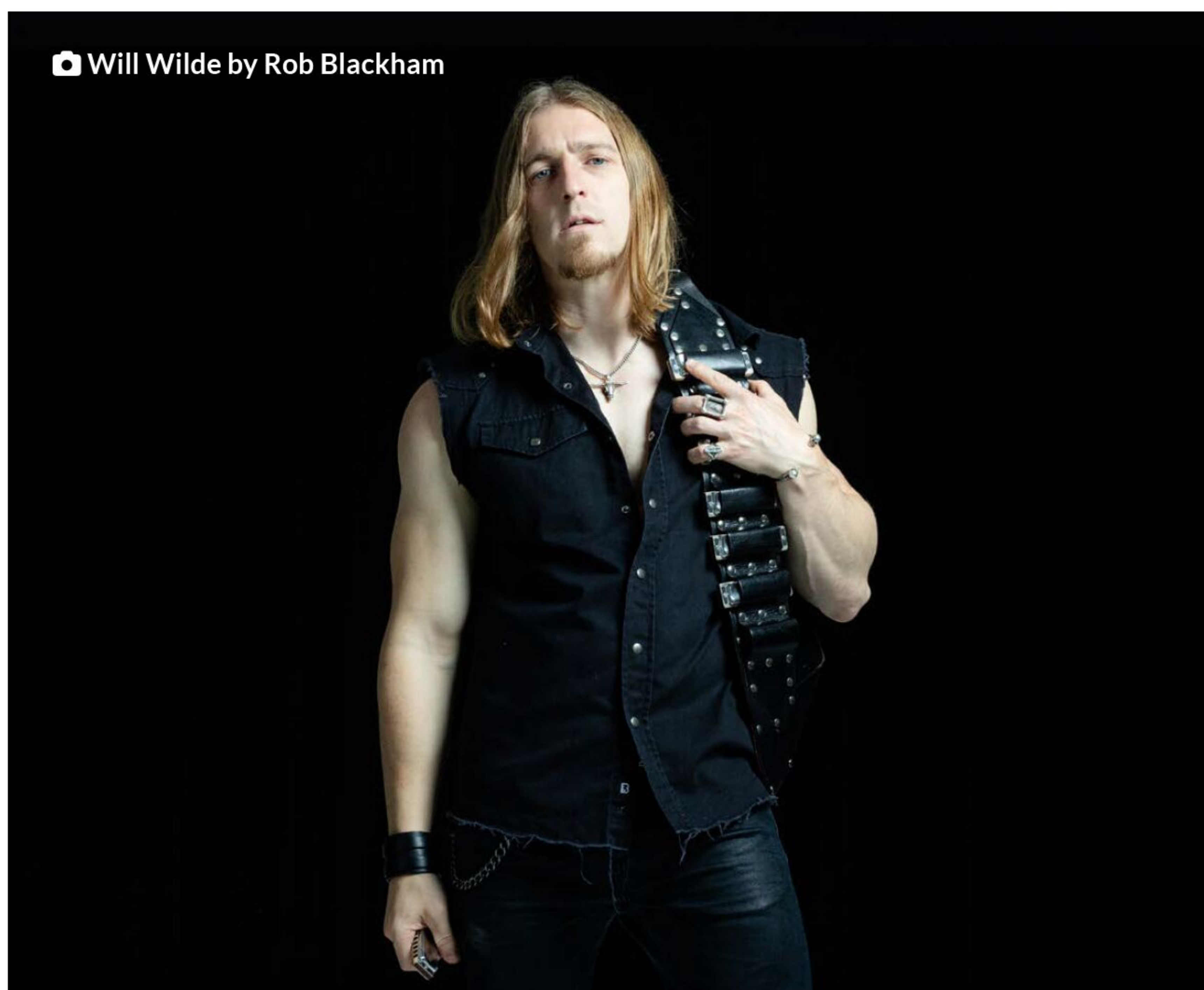
Final mastering and artwork are being wrapped, with the team waiting on a few last elements before locking the date.

A LIVE CELEBRATION

Could there be a launch concert or tribute show? Fiona would love to, and some artists have already put their hands up. The challenge is logistics. With sixteen tracks and busy schedules, assembling even a portion of the cast on one night is a big task. If it becomes possible, Blues Matters will be ready to help spread the word.

WHY THIS MATTERS

This record is about friendship, community, and song. It carries Matt's voice, his writing, and the people who loved him. It also carries practical help for others facing cancer and a hand up for the next wave of musicians. In every sense, it lives up to its title.



“All profits will go to the cancer unit that cared for Matt.”

[CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE HERE](#)



📷 Adrienne Cowan by Lina Glasir



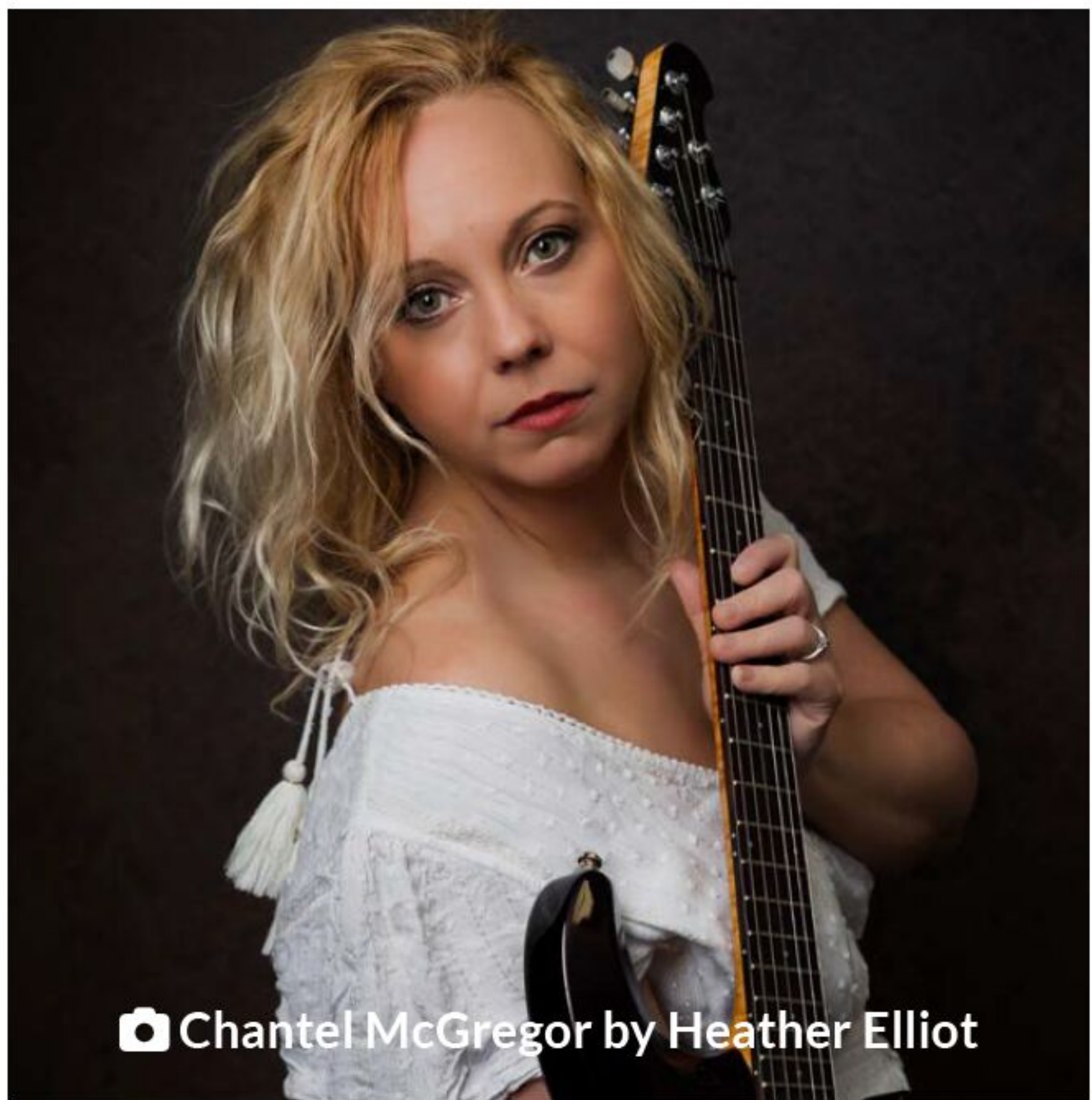
📷 Alice Armstrong by Chris Griffiths



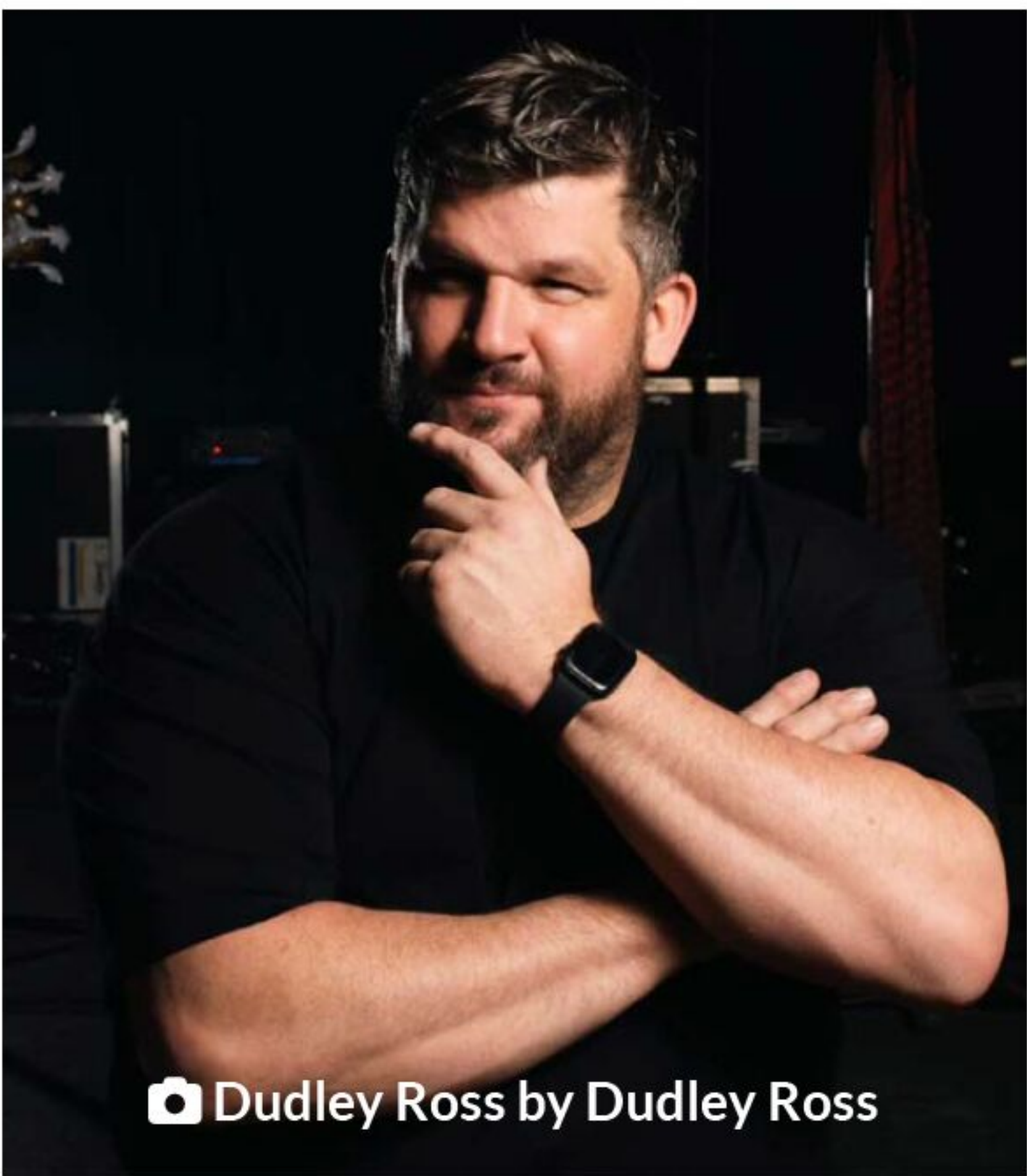
📷 Brave Rival by Global Fire Creative



📷 Dom Martin by Rob Blackham



📷 Chantel McGregor by Heather Elliot



📷 Dudley Ross by Dudley Ross



📷 When Rivers Meet by Rob Blackham

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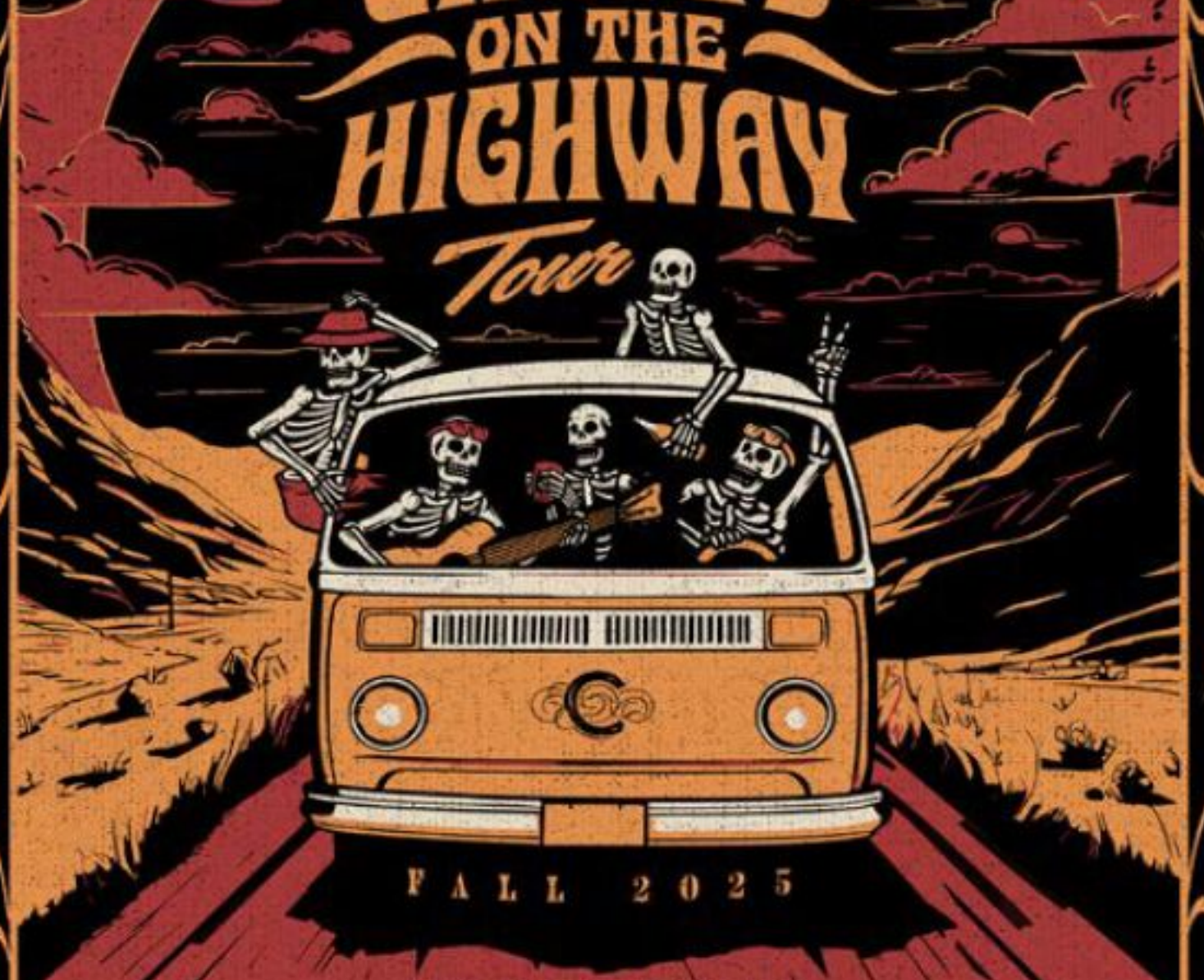
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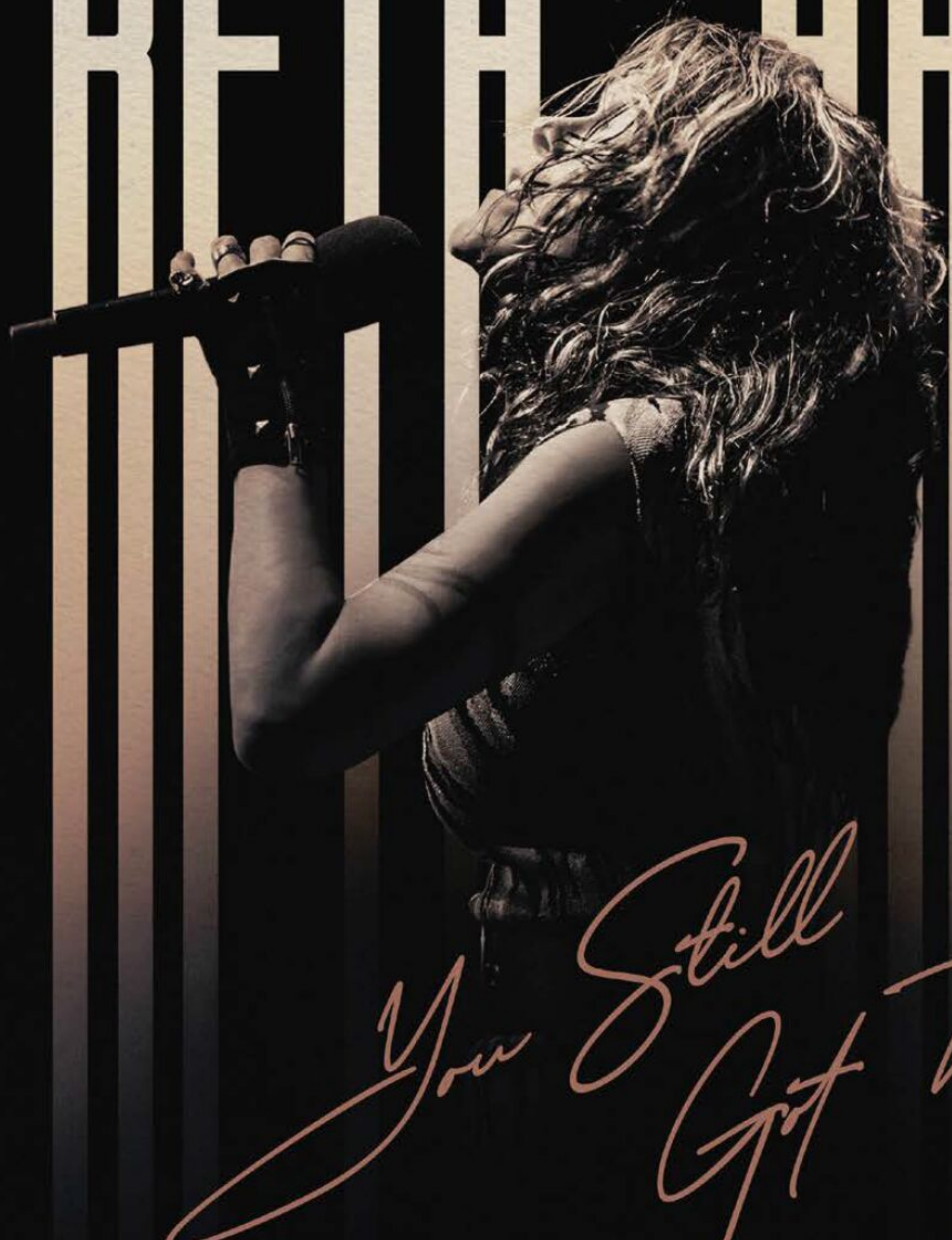
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MARTY MOFFATT

WELCOME BACK

JAY HOOKS

Houston based blues rocker Jay Hooks is back with a bang. His new album *Tequila & Bullets* is gaining rave reviews everywhere, his live shows diary is filling up, and the reinvigorated Texan is enjoying life again. It hasn't always been the case.

✍ Steve Yourglivch

📷 Cathy Wotipka

Jay released two albums on Provogue Records, a self-titled disc in 2000, and *Red Line* in 2002. Eventually the heavy touring and life on the road took its toll, added to which Jay lost his wife Marie Del Prete in 2017. 'Sweet Marie' as she was known was also his bass player. Understandably a break away from music to focus on family and self was needed. After time Gulf Coast Records recording artist Mark May came calling and Jay toured with Mark for a time until tragedy struck again. Mark died from his injuries sustained in a car accident in August last year. But now, surrounded by a loyal committed support team Jay is back and determined to make up for lost time. *Tequila & Bullets* is full on power trio; blues rock Texan style delivered with panache.

I bought Jay's self-titled album when it was released back in 2000 and it's a tried and trusted favourite of mine that I return to often, so I was thrilled to hear there was a new release and jumped at the chance to talk to Jay about it and his career.

I explained to Jay that loved that first Provogue record, (there was a self-released 1997 album *Hooked Up* prior to that), and that in my opinion the new album has regained the power and energy of that.

'I think getting out playing with Mark helped me find my levels again. A couple of club owners were giving me

shows here and there, and Mark approached me to play with him, which I ended up doing for about a year. I think it did me a lot of good. You know one guy said to me, I didn't know you played rhythm guitar, I said I don't think Mark thought that either. I play rhythm guitar by myself but I'm playing lead at the same time and singing, mixing it up. Playing a lot of rhythm with Mark got my timing right and made me more solid. I had to relearn about me; I still knew how to play but I mean a lot I forgot everything you know. I've had to relearn my own songs that I'm doing. In my head I remembered it but physically, my fingers, they've been out of it for 15 years and I think it faster than I can play it, so it took a lot of practice to get the movement again. I watched a lot of YouTube too, reminding me about stuff I'd forgotten, we didn't have that back in the day, I learned everything by ear. But I watched a lot of Kirk Fletcher, I think he's one of the best guitar players out there, and people like Joe Bonamassa and Eric Gales, they are monsters.

Lyricaly I think the connection with the JH album is back too. *Red Line* seemed to move away from that a little. I was interested to hear Jay's thoughts.

'I think so too. We said we're gonna go in the studio and make like an 80s ZZ Top live sound, raw like their first records, a straight three piece. *Red Line* I overdubbed some other guitars. I had all these Les Pauls that belonged







to producer Haddon Sayers, and we went through and tracked everything. This time we wanted the raw feel of the first album and stick with that.

The whole thing definitely has a lot of spontaneity in there because I didn't know what we wrote directly. I had a bunch of songs, me and my old manager from back then got together and we wrote everything in two weeks and then went and recorded it. That's pretty much what we did on the first record too so it's a little raw and then a lot of the playing, I was doing it on the fly you know, that's what I do, I make it up anyway. I was worried at first when I got through, I thought, oh, my Lord, it was too raw. But everyone's making their records so polished these days, with computers and everything you can do all this stuff and that's the first thing we said we didn't want to do.

There's only one cover track on *Tequila & Bullets*, a version of *Mississippi Sheiks* by Rory Gallagher. It's not the obvious choice from Rory's back catalogue.

'When we were in our pre-production and talking, I'm like, we're going to do some Johnny Winter, that's what I wanted to do, we started listening to that, and then I lis-

tened to Rory Gallagher a little bit and played with it and stuff, but I'd never really done any, when I started playing it, I felt man, this is weird, this isn't what I normally play, and then it started flowing, I'm like, hey, it's different, I fell in love with it. I've been doing it live ever since; I just absolutely love doing that song, it's a great song, and it's just something different, than what I think I would normally play. I thought it came out pretty good.

As I mentioned earlier Jay took about 15 years off from playing. Talking to him now you can feel the passion he has for the music, so I wondered if felt comfortable talking a little about why he stopped for such a long time. 'We can. I was getting close to 40 years old. I've been playing my whole life, and I just got tired. I was worn out. I'd been doing it every night since I was 15, 16 years old. And I was drinking a lot. And, as I told somebody else, I had a bunch of extracurricular activities. I couldn't stop, you know. I thought, I'll stop playing and I can get my life together and it'll be okay. Well, I quit playing, and things got worse. I worked a bunch of construction jobs, which I knew how to do because I was broke when I was a kid trying to play guitar, so I had worked with a construction job. I was unhappy but finally I got away from the drink-



ing and everything. Eventually someone invited me along to a jam night, I hadn't played in years, and I was terrible. So, I went home and started playing all week and went back and was a little better. I knew right then I was missing it. The drinking and stuff don't bother me now because I'm working, entertaining people, I just enjoy it. I keep a bottle of water in my hand so it's like I'm drinking with everybody, if someone buys me a shot I throw it over my shoulder.

I wanted to ask Jay about his early days playing around the Houston music scene. I knew that local legend Little Joe Washington had played a part. Little Joe had made a big impression on me and was one of the first people I wrote about for Blues Matters.

'Oh man, the Third Ward. When I was young, they took me down there and I played a couple

of places. Little Joe Washington used to come out and sit in with me. He had a record out in the 60s and he was going to be the big thing. He was a phenomenal guitar player. He had become homeless, and he'd come up to a gig and then he'd take off his hat and pass it around and everybody would fill his hat up and then he'd go get him a hotel or whatever he was doing. One time he was playing guitar and then just jumped onto the keyboards, I was stunned, he guy could do anything. He would do all kind of tricks, he had a hole in his shoe, and he would stick his big toe out playing the guitar on the ground with it picking notes. I'm like this guy's lost his mind, man, he was so good, and he was such a character, he was just a superstar, sweetheart of a guy, I'm a big fan, I loved him to death.'

Jay's first big break had come earlier in his career when he got to tour with another legendary





“And then she passed away, it was devastating”

Houston blues figure, Lavell White.

‘It was the first time that I went out and toured, I started playing with her right before she did her first Antone’s record, which I think was 1995, they did the record, and then I ended up touring with her for a while, and man, I loved her. She’s still alive. She’s like 91 or something, and I need to go see her. I talked to the bass player the other day that played with me with her and he said she’s doing good, and he talks to her all the time, they have her in a home but they’re taking care of her and people come get her and bring her to gigs. It was my first experience out on the road, and I loved it, I was hooked, I had a great time playing with her, she was just something else man. She could sing like nobody I ever heard. I don’t often get the call to play guitar when a singer needs a guitar player because I’m a little wild for most. Lavell she loved it, I mean she was such a great singer I don’t think she thought I could upstage her and I wasn’t trying to. She just told me I want you.’

It was after touring with Lavell that Jay recorded *Hooked Up*. How did that come about?

‘I did that after Lavell, in 95, and in this time, I had taught my wife how to play the bass, and she was getting really good at it, so we thought, let’s go make this record, and it was a bunch of cover tracks, plus I had a couple of originals, it was just like a demo, We made up a record company, Sunburst Records, that was just us. Right after we did that *Provogue* gave us a deal so we turned around and made that record and started touring on that. I had my girl with me and we were loving every bit of it. And then she passed away, it was devastating, the drummer Joe Frenchwood has passed now too. That was part of me quitting too, I fell into a deep place that took me a couple of years to pull out of. I find a lot of spirituality in the

music. I remember the first time I heard Led Zeppelin II. I was six years old, and I remember it distinctly. I wasn’t a musician, I didn’t play an instrument, but I heard Heart-breaker, and I’ll never forget it. There are certain songs, I remember exactly where I heard them for the first time. I remember the first time I heard ZZ Top. I was 12. I had just started playing guitar, and somebody played Tejas for me, and to this day, it’s my favourite ZZ Top record still. When I was a kid I was listening to Billy Gibbons, Jimi Hendrix, Lynyrd Skynyrd and a bunch of Southern Rock when this girl got me to listen to Stevie Ray Vaughan. I was about 13, and I mean, right there, I lost it, I’m like, okay, this is better than anything I’m listening to, I’m gonna learn how to play like that. So now I’m walking around everywhere I go, I got a guitar in my hand, Stevie Ray Vaughan this, Stevie Ray Vaughan that, you know, blah, blah, blah, and finally this old guy goes, hey man, look, go down to the store and buy a fucking Johnny Winter record, I don’t care which one, and you’ll shut the fuck up, right, so I went out, and by chance, I bought *Second Winter*, that three-sided record, and I took it home, and I started listening, I went, oh my goodness, and I’m telling you, I stole every lick I know from that record.

You can certainly hear the Stevie Ray and Johnny Winter influences in Jay’s playing. He plays with a blues authenticity flavoured with some Southern spice. Jay is not one to be shackled in his performing.

‘Yeah, I see guys, and they play the same guitar solo. Man, I’m already done watching you. You know, I saw Stevie Ray a bunch of times and I’ll tell you something, he didn’t play anything like the record, and he didn’t play anything twice. I’ve never seen anybody play guitar like that. I’d say the closest thing, I saw Albert Collins when I was 18, and he completely ripped my head off. I mean, that was the second-best guitar player, I think. And there’s some video, I told somebody the other day, I said, man, there’s a video of them, Albert Collins and Stevie Ray doing *Frosty*, man. He’s standing there right with Stevie Ray, that’s the only guy I’ve seen that Stevie Ray didn’t just wear out.

You can read my review of *Tequila & Bullets* in the October issue of *Blues Matters*. The album is out on Joplin Street Music now.

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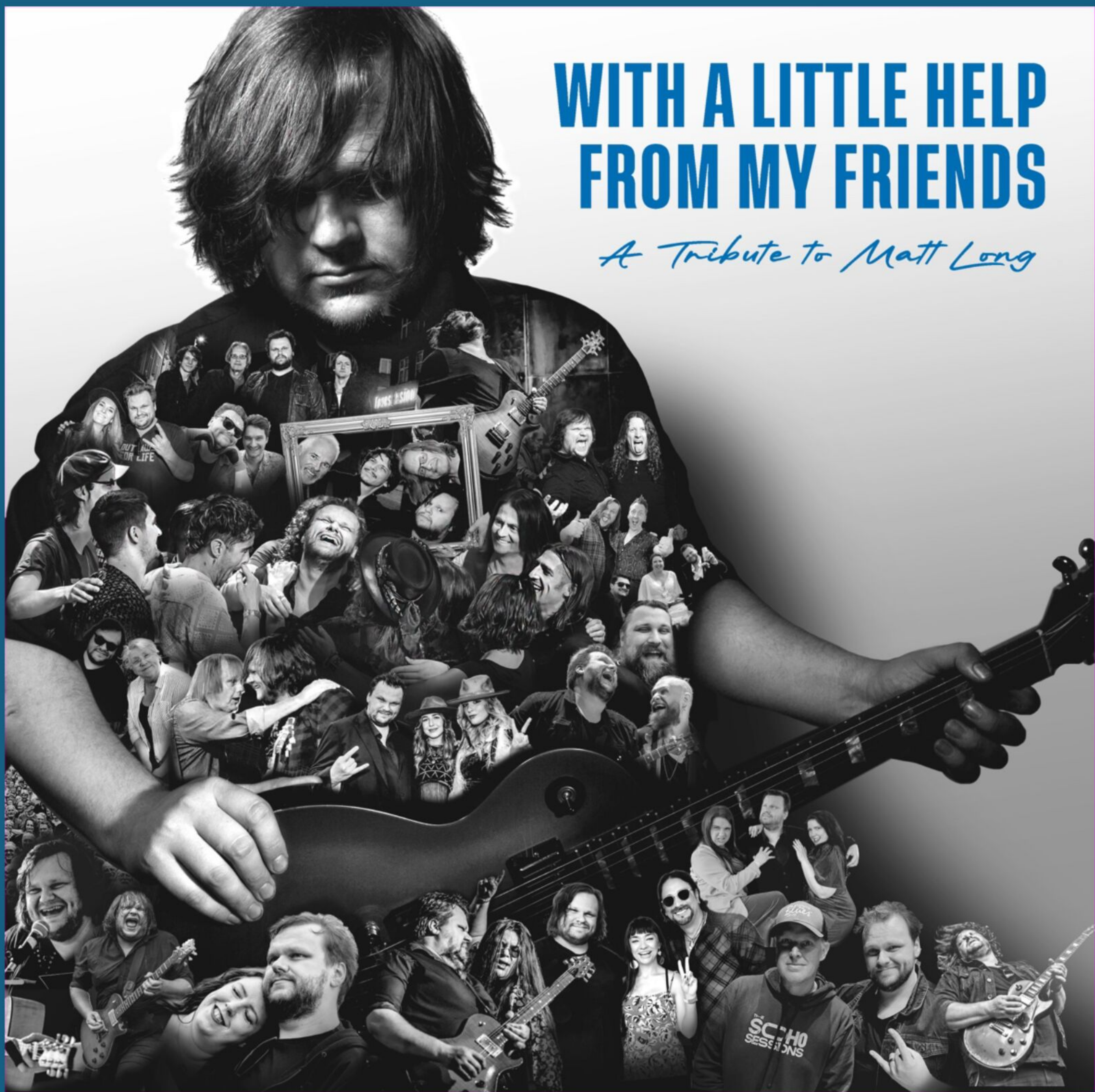


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BIG LILLY

THE BLUES IS MY
BIOGRAPHY

BRANCH

On a chilly evening in Chicago, Billy Branch takes a call, not from a studio or a smoky club, but from the parking lot of Costco. The harmonica expert laughs about it, “Very exciting activities!” he says. He’s just finished another session of Blues in the Schools, the community education project he’s been devoted to since 1978. It’s a fitting image of Branch’s life; grounded, generous, and still carrying the blues wherever he goes.

✎ Colin Campbell 📷 As credited

BLUES IN THE SCHOOLS: TEACHING HISTORY THROUGH HARMONICA

For nearly five decades, Billy Branch has shared his love of the blues with generations of young people. His Blues in the Schools programme brings the roots of the music directly into classrooms, teaching not only harmonica but also history, culture, and creativity.

“I’ve been doing it since 1978, right now, I’m working with a predominantly African American school on Chicago’s West Side. The students are from fifth to eighth grade. They learn to play the harmonica, a few standard songs, even write their own, and then perform for their school.” The programme is as much about empowerment as it is about music. “Sometimes the kids ask, ‘Are you rich?’” he laughs. “I tell them, ‘In a manner of speaking, we’re all rich, you count your blessings.’” But more often, the students want to know about blues legends like Willie Dixon or Little Walter, names Branch introduces with reverence. “We talk about all the principal characters in blues history. It’s important they know whose shoulders we stand on.”

CATCHING THE BLUES BUG

Branch’s own story began when he was a boy in Los Angeles, far from the smoky clubs of the Windy City. “I picked up the harmonica at about age 10 or 11,” he recalls. “I walked into Woolworth’s, saw this shiny instrument in a glass case, and a little voice told me I could play it.” He bought it for a dollar and discovered he could immediately play songs by ear.

After returning to Chicago to attend the University of Illinois, he found himself surrounded by giants. “The blues was everywhere, Junior Wells, James Cotton, Carey Bell, Big Walter Horton, One-Armed John Wrencher... the list goes on. I was bitten by the blues bug and determined to learn the Chicago blues harmonica.”

He didn’t have formal lessons. Instead, he learned the hard way, through the Chicago tradition known as “head cutting.” “That’s when you get on stage with the masters,

and they try to blow you off the stage,” he laughs. “You either learn or you burn. It wasn’t hostile it was how you learned. Trial by fire.”

A FAMILY LINE OF MUSIC AND SURVIVAL

Though Branch didn’t come from a family of professional musicians, he later discovered deep musical roots. “My father played bass in the Army during the Korean War, and my great-grandfather, who was an escaped slave from Missouri and opened a general store in Iowa, played harmonica too. My grandmother, who raised me, turned out to be a concert pianist and singer. I didn’t know that until after she passed.”

Music, it seems, was always in his blood. But it was the Chicago scene of the ’70s that made him. “There were so many greats; Koko Taylor, Buddy Guy, Junior Wells, Willie Dixon, Sunnyland Slim, Otis Rush. I was blessed to have played with, recorded with, and toured with many of them.”

FROM THERESA’S LOUNGE TO ROSA’S

Branch came up through the iconic clubs of Chicago’s South Side, Theresa’s Lounge, the Checkerboard, Pepper’s, the Queen Bee. “In the ’70s and ’80s, most of our audiences were African American, but by the ’80s, blues clubs started moving into white neighbourhoods. We worked hard to keep a mix; that was an accomplishment in itself.”

His long-standing relationship with Rosa’s Lounge is a point of pride. “We played the grand opening, which was 42 years ago,” he smiles. “It’s home.” His latest release, *The Blues Is My Biography*, is the first full release on Rosa’s Lounge label. “It was time to record,” he says. “Ronnie Baker Brooks and I co-wrote *Begging for Change*, which is kind of the centrepiece of the album. Shemekia Copeland joined me on vocals. The record reflects my personal views and experiences; it’s a statement of who I am.”



LISTEN
TO THIS INTERVIEW



YOUTUBE



STILL FEELING THE FIRE

After decades on stage, Branch admits that he still gets nervous before a show. “I think it’s good,” he says. “That nervous energy, it’s adrenaline. Every audience is a new challenge. You’ve got to make them love what you do.” For Billy Branch, the blues isn’t a style, it’s a lifetime’s calling. From the classrooms of Chicago to the stages of the world, his harmonica still speaks for the generations who came before and those who are learning from him today. “The blues,” he says, “is my biography.”

When it comes to the blues, few living musicians embody its spirit and storytelling power quite like Billy Branch. With decades of touring, recording, and teaching behind him, Branch continues to draw inspiration from both personal experience and the broader world around him. His latest work carries the weight of lived truth — a mix of collaboration, social commentary, and the timeless grooves that make the blues eternal.

WRITING WITHOUT A FORMULA

When asked about his songwriting process, he laughs softly. “There’s no formula, you get an idea, and if you think it’s a good one, you write a line or two, step back, and come back to it. You write as you feel.”

Many of his songs are born from real events and emotions. “Ballad Of A Million Men I wrote when that march happened about 30 years ago,” he explains. “There’s inspiration everywhere, but I never force it. The blues has to come naturally.”

That sense of honesty runs through his recent album, a deeply personal and musically rich collection that finds Branch exploring both his roots and his relationships.

COLLABORATIONS AND SOUL CONNECTIONS

On *Hole in Your Soul*, Branch joins forces with fellow blues titan Bobby Rush, and the chemistry is undeniable. “Bobby was gracious enough to be my guest,” Branch says



proudly. “He did a fantastic job, both vocally and with a great harmonica solo.”

Other tracks reflect collaboration in different ways. “Call Your Bluff was written by my former drummer, Andrew Blaze Thomas,” he explains. “He’s put aside his musical career for now to pursue his PhD, but he gave us a great tune.”

Branch also revisits the Lou Rawls classic *Dead End Street*. “That was one of my favourites as a teenager. I rewrote the monologue to reflect my personal history and observations. It’s always been one of my all-time favourites.”

SONGS WITH MEANING

Some of Branch’s most powerful work carries deeper social messages. “*Begging for Change* had been sitting as a sketch for five years,” he says. “We feel it has the potential to be a global anthem. All over the world, people are unhappy with their governments, feeling abandoned or persecuted. You don’t have to look far to see that people are dissatisfied politically and economically.”

The blues has always been about truth-telling, and Branch leans into that tradition. Even a track like *Real Good Friends*, speaks to betrayal and resilience. “Your real good friends will stab you in the back,” he admits. “It’s sad but true. It’s not your enemies who hurt you, it’s your friends, because they know your stuff.”

“THE FACTS OF LIFE” — TEACHING THE BLUES

As a lifelong educator, Branch remains passionate about passing on the blues’ deeper meaning. “We have a mantra in our Blues in Schools programme. It’s a call and response: I say, ‘Why are we here?’ and the kids reply, ‘To sing and play the blues!’ Then I ask, ‘What are the blues?’ and I use Willie Dixon’s definition the facts of life.”

“The blues are our history, our culture, and the roots of America’s music,” Branch continues. “Whatever you’re going through can be put into a blues song. It’s universal. Three chords; one, four, five, call and response. It’s simple





but powerful. You get one of those blues shuffles going, and you can't help but pat your feet. That's what it's about."

LOVE, LIFE, AND RETURN OF THE ROACHES

Even love, he says, can bring its own blues. "Toxic Love was co-written with my wife Rosa," Branch says with a smile. "It's not about us, but I'm sure a lot of people have experienced what you might call toxic love. As Lou Rawls sang, 'Love is a hurting thing.' It's got its ups and downs; there's always blues in love."

Branch closes the record with Return of the Roaches, a reimagining of a song from his 1980s album Mississippi Flashback. "My producer Larry Batiste heard the original and said, 'Man, we got to redo this, I told him, 'That was 40 years ago, I can't play like that anymore.' He said, 'I don't want you to. Let's make it new.'"

The result is both a nod to his past and a statement of evolution. "Larry did a stellar job," Branch says. "He brought that R&B-funk flavour from the '70s and '80s. He even sang background vocals. Because of our collaboration, the album came out as well as it did."

BLUES WITHOUT BORDERS

The album took nearly a year to complete; four tracks in Oakland, seven in Chicago and Branch couldn't be prouder. "Out of the eleven songs, I wrote or co-wrote nine," he notes. "I think it's one of the best things I've ever put out, mainly because it's personal."

Still, for Branch, the drive to play and create remains grounded in something both simple and profound. "I gotta eat, this is my job," he jokes, before adding, "But it's also fulfilling. To make a living doing what you love, seeing people's smiles and applause all around the world even when they don't understand the lyrics, they get the feeling. That's the blues."

In a world of constant change, Billy Branch continues to stand as a torchbearer for music that transcends borders. "I feel like the blues is the most universal music that exists, it's simple, it's honest, and it's powerful. When you play it right, when the groove hits, everybody feels it."

HARMONICA MAN

When asked how the song Harmonica Man came about, Branch chuckles.

"That's who I am, all my life I've had the harmonica at the ready. If I'm walking through an airport and there's a musician playing, I might join him. I'd ask, 'Hey man, you know any blues? What key are you in? I'd play it on the bus, on the streets and I still do. Recently I was in Oakland and there was a family celebrating a 96-year-old's birthday at a nearby table, so I took out my harmonica and played Happy Birthday. They loved it. I used to walk through the neighbourhoods, and the kids would call out, 'Hey, Harmonica Man, you gonna come back?' And I would. That harmonica has been with me most of my life. I always tell harp players, don't leave home without it, it's one of the few instruments you can always carry and have at the ready."

LEARNING FROM THE LEGENDS

"If you're going to learn the blues, do your history. Do the research. Listen, study, and practice. I was fortunate, I learned firsthand from Big Walter, James Cotton, Carey Bell, Junior Wells, and One-Armed John Wrencher. They knew I was there to learn, and in their own way, they encouraged me." That encouragement would later bear



Colin and Billy meeting face to face at the Chicago Blues Festival in 2025

fruit when Bruce Iglauer assembled the now-legendary Harp Attack album. “Bruce asked Cotton, Junior, and Carey who should be the fourth harp player. They all said, unanimously, ‘Get Billy.’ That’s one of the finest accolades I’ve ever received.”

DEFINING SUCCESS

“Success is being able to perform on a high level, in premier venues, showcases, festivals, and concert halls and having a recording that’s well-received and gets ample airplay. Of course, financial success is part of it, but performing and connecting with audiences is what really counts.”

A GUMBO OF SOUND

“It’s not your typical blues album,” he explains. “How You Living is almost hip-hop blues. Ballad Of The Million Men has a reggae feel. Toxic Love leans toward smooth jazz,

and then we’ve got traditional blues in Real Good Friends and Hole in Your Soul. There’s social commentary in Beggin’ for Change. It’s a fair gumbo of music.”

LOOKING AHEAD

With the album release party set for November 21st, Branch’s focus is on taking the new material on the road. “We’re hoping the album creates enough buzz for us to tour more, especially internationally and hit more of the big festivals. We’re working on a European and UK tour, nothing definite yet, but that’s the plan.”

Before signing off, Branch has a message for blues fans everywhere: “We blues musicians really appreciate your support. Please tune in, come see us when we’re in your area, and just keep on loving the blues.”

For further information see website: <https://www.billy-branch.com>



Janet Takayama

EXPLORE



The Illustrated Blues Of Brian Kramer

ONE MAN BAND



Brian Kramer

20-10-25

The great Bluesman, Larry Johnson opened my eyes and ears to the possibilities beyond the six strings and two hands. As a teenager in the 70s, I'd been absorbing the Blues of Lightnin' Hopkins and Robert Johnson and how they could make that guitar come alive fingerpicking bass lines and treble runs with splashes of chords ringing in.

Then I started taking in Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Blake, Rev Gary Davis. But this "ragtime" Blues mystified me. I stumbled across Larry Johnson playing at a small dive Blues bar in New York's lower East Side called Dan Lynch. This was the first time I'd witnessed one man making an acoustic guitar sound like a whole band, and it was spectacular!

They were selling his album: Fast & Funky at the bar and I purchased a copy and started to study it, seeing

Larry as much as I could play live at Lynch's (I was a mere 16 years old).

With Larry's playing I could hear a whole band emerging from the strings; bass, trumpet, piano, drums... This gave me an unlimited appreciation for fingerpicking guitar and the confidence it takes to bring the whole band through the strings, with one person conducting.

So here's a little nod in the direction of someone who should be much more known and digested in the world of Blues guitar.

Someone who I also had the great privilege to get to know, tour and record with over the years.

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BLUES IN A NEW-YORK STATE OF MIND

Sean Chambers is keeping the blues live and alive – one legend at a time while forging his own path to greatness

✍ Abbe Sparks 📷 Arnie Goodman

Blues-rock guitarist Sean Chambers continues to evolve as one of the genre's most powerful contemporary artists. His ninth album, *Sean Chambers Live* featuring The Savoy Brown Rhythm Section, was released in February on Quarto Valley Records to critical acclaim. Chambers is the kind of musician who quietly seeps into your musical orbit until, before you know it, you can't get enough.

Early in his career, Chambers was part of Hubert Sumlin's Muddy Waters tribute album *About Them Shoes*, recorded at Showplace Studios in New Jersey. The record featured Eric Clapton, Keith Richards and Levon Helm among others. "I was a kid among giants in the business," he recalls. "I still have no idea how I ended up being so lucky."

Throughout his career, Chambers has connected with and learned from blues legends such as Hubert Sumlin (Howlin' Wolf), Kim Simmonds (Savoy Brown), and producer Ben Elliot – mentors who each played a vital role in his growth as an artist. "I got my big break back in 1998 playing with the great Hubert Sumlin," says Sean. "That experience transformed me from a rock 'n' roll kid into a blues guitarist."

WITH THE SAVOY BROWN RHYTHM SECTION

Fresh from their European tour, Sean and The Savoy Brown Rhythm Section recently returned to the New York tri-state area for a run of shows. After a performance at the Katherine Hepburn Performing Arts Center in Connecticut, Sean spoke about his mentors, his partnership with Savoy Brown's rhythm team, and the road ahead.

"The first time I played with Pat De Salvo and Garnet Grimm was in October 2022," he says. "Kim was really supportive of us playing together, and shortly after we began touring, he passed away."

Chambers also shared the stage with harmonica legend James Montgomery. "We've done a lot of shows together and have more booked for 2026. People love the co-bill—it just works."





REMEMBERING HUBERT SUMLIN

Chambers first met Sumlin in 1998 in Memphis. “I was so nervous, but Hubert made me feel at ease straight away. He told me, ‘Let your hair down and have a good time.’ It worked like a charm.” The partnership lasted five years, with Chambers serving as guitarist and bandleader.

Years later, his 2021 album *That’s What I’m Talking About* became a heartfelt tribute to his mentor. “The title came from producer Ben Elliot,” he explains. “Whenever something hit the mark, he’d say, ‘That’s what I’m talkin’ about.’”

BEN ELLIOT AND KIM SIMMONDS

Chambers met the late producer Ben Elliot in 2002 while recording Sumlin’s album. “I didn’t really know him then, but later I signed to his label thanks to Arnie Goodman. Showplace Studios was legendary—everyone from Clapton to Kim Simmonds recorded there.”

Chambers met Simmonds in 2019 at the Bowlful of Blues Festival in Iowa. “Pat De Salvo came up and said Kim wanted to meet me. I went backstage, and when Savoy Brown started playing, the hairs on the back of my hands stood up. They were that good—a powerful three-piece blues-rock band.”

After that, the two stayed in touch. “We recorded at the same studio and shared the same producer,” Sean notes. “Ben Elliot really brought us together.”

CARRYING THE LEGACY FORWARD

Chambers kept in close contact with Simmonds and his bandmates. “Kim and I spoke on the phone several times. Pat lives in Orlando and often sat in at my gigs—he’s a monster player.”

As for what’s next, Chambers is already planning his next studio album. “I’m writing new material now and hope to be back in the studio within five months.” And the dream collaboration? “Buddy Guy,” he says without hesitation. “I’ve met him, but I’ve never played with him. That would be amazing.”

Sean Chambers Live featuring The Savoy Brown Rhythm Section has received widespread praise, keeping both the blues—and Kim Simmonds’ memory—alive.

BLUES IN NEW YORK

October brought a wave of blues talent through New York City and the tri-state area. Highlights included Buddy Red’s debut at Berlin on the Lower East Side, 17-year-old Kai Johnson joining Wayne Baker Brooks at The Iridium, Toronzo Cannon at The Iridium, Dave Keyes at The Bitter End, Jackie Venson at The Cutting Room, and the legendary Blue Lou Marini and Lluís Coloma alongside Zev Katz, Chris Parker and Keith Harrison—also at The Cutting Room.

It’s safe to say, the blues are alive and well in a New York state of mind.

***“I’m happy, but as
an artist you’re
never satisfied”***



A MAN ON A MISSION

MANU LANVIN

Manu Lanvin might not be a household name in the UK but that is likely to change soon. He has built a huge following in his native France and his new album, *Man On A Mission* is already making waves in the USA. His early career was as a rock singer signed to a major label, but Manu discovered his true blues roots after meeting and working with Calvin Russell in 2009.

✎ Steve Yourglivch 📷 Eric Martin

From that point The Blues Devils were created, and he has never looked back. On this latest project he has collaborated closely with France based Texan bluesman Neal Black to produce his most rounded and personal album to date. We caught up via zoom recently.

I began by asking Manu about how well the new release was being received by the critics and media.

'I'm happy, but as an artist you're never satisfied, you're never 100% satisfied, you always want more. No, I mean, since the beginning of this project, the Devil Blues, things are getting better and better. We have a large audience in France, so we tour a lot, we can't complain, we do more than 100 gigs a year. It's good in France for a Blues Rock artist which is how we get classed. I know that I'm not a Chicago blues artist, I'm just using all my influences and all the music, great musicians and artists I've been listening to when I was a kid.

The album has great, great feedback in France. We've been able, for once, to get airplay on some big radio stations, not only blues radio stations in France. Also in Belgium, KC-21, maybe you've heard of this radio station. For me, this is the biggest radio station in Belgium. And, voila, we have a partnership with them. We're going to make a showcase for them. So, work in progress, I will say.

On *Man On A Mission* you've collaborated with Neal Black a lot on the writing. I think you met Neal quite a while ago.

'We had a tour together in 2013. I met him because I have a recording studio in Paris, La Chocolaty, Chocolate Factory, and he recorded an album for this American artist called Janet Martin. We became friends immediately.

The late Calvin Russell had a huge impact on Manu. He co-wrote and played on the Texans final album *Dawg Eat Dawg*. I asked Manu how much of an influence Russell became. Calvin had quite a history in Texas including spells in prison.

'Oh, big, big, you know, he's the one who helped me to not have any complex, to get rid of any complex in doing this music in France. He taught me to find my own path, don't listen to the major company, just follow your instinct and your desire of doing music and the audience will come. And this is what happened in France. It was like a rebirth, this Devil Blues thing, and here we are now. This is my 7th album but the first three were totally different. I had been singing, and I got a big deal with Warner Music Company as an artist. And the thing is they name a producer who was more in control of what was recorded on the tapes, that was in 2000. We couldn't play blues because it wasn't trendy. I saw so many real, authentic artists, step-by-step, with the pressure of the music com-

pany, they became maybe too mainstream. If not pop, or I would call sometimes shitty music.

When Calvin passed, I said OK I'm going to do everything from the start. I remember, I left on the road with my drummer. We were a two-piece band, with a small car, you know, with the drums, with a small sound system, and we were playing everywhere. We were playing in, can you believe, in nudist camps sometimes, some hairdresser's salons, for some time, for monkey money, like for 50 bucks. It wasn't enough to pay the gas, the tolls, and everything. Step by step, month after year after year, the audience became bigger and bigger, and there were some promoters who said, would you be interested in playing my festival? Oh, yes, of course.

He was a sweet guy. He was such a piece of cake, this guy, very polite with everyone. He didn't do very bad things. Him and his brother were just bringing some drugs from Mexico. Texas was a very tough state. They had been caught many times. Mexican justice is very tough. But he had time to think about all of this and start to be inspired in the idea of writing songs about all the experiences he had been through. People loved him in France. He had presence, a very strong magnetism I remember when I recorded Dawg Eat Dawg we went to Marrakesh because I had a place there. I wanted to record it there. Can you believe a Texan guy in Marrakesh.

He was stuck in his room all night long all day long writing lyrics. We were producing the music downstairs in one of the major rooms and he was writing and at the end of the day around 6 p.m. he would come to us and start to sing and we had a very young sound engineer with us who didn't know who Calvin Russell was. He immediately fell in love with him. I said, what's this guy? He's amazing.

Man On A Mission is a very well-crafted album containing real songs that express emotion and tell stories, not simply vehicles for guitar solos. The song Savigay Sur-Orge in particular sounds very personal.

'Nico Bonniere is my partner when I produce an album and he's the one who said on this album we're not going to play any very long solo guitar; you must focus on your inspiration and on your song. This is what we want to show now to the people. Of course, we are always using our emotions and our experience, we put some romance on it. We over-exaggerate things because we want people to recognize themselves. Love, failure, all this kind of stuff, you know? Regrets sometimes.

Savigay Sur-Orge is about my mother, she's still alive and as I'm getting older now, I think it's the moment to tell things that we never talk about. I wanted her to know that I don't care what happened when I was a kid, I don't blame her because I know there was a lot of love and it helped me to bring a lot of poetry in that song. I think my voice as well is different on this album, maybe I was

over-exaggerating before on my previous albums? I have a strong voice and it's easy for me to shout, to scream. three hours because I've been touring so much and it's an easy game for me. Nico told me to use the grain and timbre of my voice to sing softer because your soft voice is very emotional.

Manu does have a distinctive voice, well suited to rock or blues. In many ways I'm reminded of Joe Cocker. 'Joe Cocker is not my first influence, but I've been listening to him a lot. And especially when he went to the USA. and worked with Leon Russell, there is this live album, this amazing live album with the Mad Dogs and Englishman, that's terrific, so of course it's one of the things I've been listening to a lot when I was a kid. We've used lots of horns this time which I think is an influence from Joe Cocker too, and Southside Johnny.'

Manu is well respected by blues musicians, as well as Neal Black and Calvin Russell, he has performed with Popa Chubby and Taj Mahal has recorded a track with him.

'On the album Grand Casino, we did a duet together on So Come On Down, on that song. I sent him the song I wanted him to sing on. It's an original track but he got confused, I think he went on the internet and heard Blues Booze and Rock N Roll and thought that was the one he was supposed to sing. So, when he came to France, he already had all the lyrics ready of the wrong song. He was so disappointed because he really liked Blues Booze & Rock N Roll.'

As part of the album launch Manu will be performing at the iconic Bataclan venue in Paris, remembered as the site of a terrorist attack in 2015 when 90 music fans were among the victims that day. It is sure to be an emotional experience.

'It's going to be, for sure, it's going to be very emotional. I want people being totally safe in that place, and there are concerns every day there. But of course, I will have a few words on what happened, just to make them remember that if I'm here, it's a question of, it's a resistance. I must go on a mission. My mission is to bring joy, happiness, love, and this is why I'm here today. You know, in the name of what happened, unfortunately, in this venue.

Man On A Mission is released on Gel Productions
Stay up to date with all the latest Manu Lanvin news at <https://www.manulanvin.com>

EXPLORE





“My mission is
to bring joy,
happiness, love”

REECCA



DOWNES

A STORM IS COMING...

Rebecca Downes has carved out a powerful space in British blues rock, combining heartfelt songwriting with an expressive, commanding voice. Her story begins in a house filled with swing and jazz, where Ella Fitzgerald and Julie London were regular sounds on the family record player.

✍ Paul Long 📷 D R Fossey

"My parents loved the Rat Pack," she recalls. "And my grandmother sang too, though not professionally." There was also a creative streak in her wider family — her relative Stanley Myers composed the music for *The Deer Hunter* and conducted the New York Philharmonic.

FINDING HER VOICE

"I was one of those kids you just couldn't shut up," Rebecca laughs. "At school, I sang in a musical about people being sent into space. After that, everyone called me 'Rebecca the singer', and I suppose that's who I became." In secondary school she joined her first band, singing *Wonderful Tonight* and *Run to You*. The moment the music started, she knew she had found her place. "I was that awkward kid who didn't fit in. But suddenly, I belonged. It was the best feeling in the world."

LEARNING GUITAR AND WRITING SONGS

Determined to keep creating, Rebecca convinced her dad to let her take guitar lessons. "Money was tight, and I think my parents thought it was another fad, but I wore him down," she smiles. "The guitar I got made my fingers bleed, but I loved it."

By the age of twelve she was writing songs. "As soon as I learned three chords, that was enough. I didn't care about solos. I just wanted to turn the things in my head into something other people could hear." Songwriting quickly became both therapy and identity. "It's what keeps me grounded, and it always will."

A CREATIVE PARTNERSHIP

Her long-running collaboration with guitarist and producer Steve Birkett began over a decade ago. "I'd stopped performing for a while after years in bands. Then I got the itch again and someone said, 'I'll ask my mate Steve.' We started out just jamming, then began sharing songs. We decided to write together and something clicked immediately. It was a real partnership from day one."

Their working process is fluid. "Sometimes I start an idea, sometimes he does. But every song becomes both of us," she says. "I've never written that closely with anyone else."

BUILDING A TEAM

Their debut album *Back to the Start* was recorded on a shoestring. "It was all favours. Studio time when someone had a free slot, friends playing for nothing, that sort of thing," she says. "But I'm proud of it. We created something special out of very little."

Not long after, Colin Speller joined as manager. "Colin has been incredible. He approached it strategically, learning about the industry from the inside and networking properly. Without Steve and Colin, I wouldn't still be doing this."

TEACHING AND MENTORING

Rebecca now teaches at BIMM Birmingham and South & City College, as well as privately. "I didn't think I'd have a passion for anything outside of performing, but I love

*“I picked up the guitar to translate what was in my head, **not** to play solos”*

teaching. Being surrounded by creative students is inspiring. They teach me as much as I teach them.”

TALKING HONESTLY

She also co-hosts a podcast that digs into the realities of being an independent musician. “It started from conversations with friends like Alan Nimmo from King King,” she explains. “We talked about how so many artists struggle but feel they can’t admit it. The idea was to have open, honest chats about the things usually kept under wraps. We’re not pretending to have the answers, just giving space for the conversation.”

Rebecca admits she’s a private person and finds social media exposure difficult. “I’m still that insecure kid deep down. I can share some things, but not everything. Artists have to balance being visible with staying sane.”

A STORM IS COMING

Her new album *A Storm Is Coming* reflects that tension between vulnerability and strength. “We never start from nothing,” she says. “We’re both constantly writing, and

songs bubble up to the surface. Then we decide what fits together.” Steve plays almost everything on the record except drums. “He’s incredible,” she says. “He has such musicality and vision. I’ll describe a guitar tone or mood, and he’ll just get it.”

The record leans toward introspection. “It’s much harder to write a happy song,” Rebecca laughs. “There’s a confessional side on songs like *Bitter Taste*, *These Days* and *A Storm Is Coming*. They express how we feel looking around at the world, but there’s also some humour and energy in the more rock-driven tracks.”

The title song speaks to broader themes. “It’s about anxiety and the state of the world,” she explains. “I see my students worrying about what kind of future they’re walking into. The song came from that feeling that truth is getting lost in the noise.”

WRITING FROM TRUTH

Rebecca’s lyrics often deal with confusion and compassion in equal measure. “*These Days* is my hands-in-the-air song,” she says. “It’s about the chaos and division around us, but also a plea for love and understanding. Surely we can do better?”

Though she’s never described herself as a traditional blues artist, Rebecca acknowledges its influence. “To me, blues is about emotion and storytelling. On songs like *Waiting on the Morning* and *Bitter Taste*, I use vocal techniques drawn from blues singers because they express emotion in such a powerful way.”

BALANCING EMOTION AND CONTROL

That emotional delivery comes with discipline. “When you’re performing, you need one foot in emotion and one in technique,” she says. “If you lean too far either way, you lose it. People have paid to see you, and your job is to give them the best performance possible, not to fall apart on stage. The emotions are in the song. I don’t need to explain them between numbers.”

INSPIRATION AND HONESTY

Rebecca finds inspiration in musicians who make music for the right reasons. “I don’t care what genre it is, as long as it’s honest,” she says. “King King always move me. When Alan Nimmo sings live, it hits me in the heart. That’s what it’s all about.”



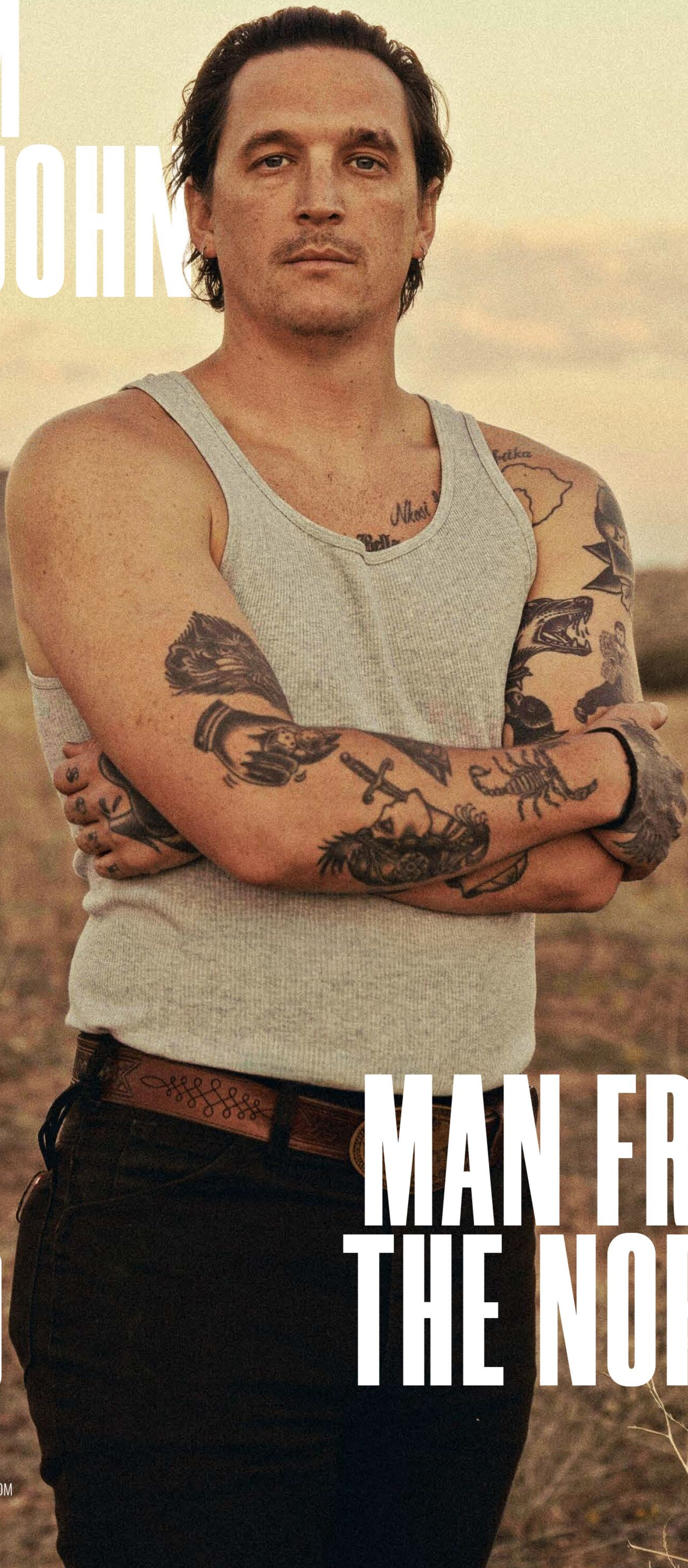


📷 Live shots by Mal Whichelow

EXPLORE



LIAM
ST JOHN



MAN FROM
THE NORTH

WATCH
THIS INTERVIEW

 **YOUTUBE**

Liam St. John is one of those rare artists who channels raw emotion and grit into every note he sings. With a sound that fuses the deep soul of the blues with a modern edge, he's quickly making waves on the contemporary scene. His powerhouse vocals, rooted in gospel passion and rock 'n' roll energy, cut straight to the bone.

✎ Colin Campbell

📷 Supplied

Blues Matters caught up with him on a rare day off from an extensive tour to talk about his musical journey, influences, and what drives his fiery approach to the blues.

FROM SPOKANE TO THE STAGE

Liam St. John greets me warmly from his hometown of Spokane, Washington, fresh from a sold-out hometown show. "It was amazing, it was all I imagined and more."

It's a rare pause in a whirlwind tour schedule that has taken the soulful singer-songwriter from the Pacific Northwest to the UK and back. But for St. John, being home is grounding. "This is where it all started," he says. "The blues found me at a really young age. It helped me process my feelings and emotions it's always been the thing that's moved me."

BORN INTO SOUND

Music runs deep in St. John's family. "My sister's a singer-songwriter too, and my mom's incredibly artistic she's got great taste in music. We grew up listening to Van Morrison, Ray Charles, and Tracy Chapman on vinyl. That kind of music just sticks with you." What stuck hardest, though, was the blues its honesty, grit, and heart. "It's that raw, unfiltered emotion, you can hear the pain, the truth in a blues singer's voice. That's always what's drawn me in." Like many great vocalists, St. John's first stage was the church. "That's where I got my live performance footing. Then came the dive bars and late-night open mics singing for whiskey and experience. It taught me how to command a room where no one's listening. That's where I learned my stagecraft. Once I played with a full band for the first time, I knew that was it, it's where I feel most alive. I still get nervous, especially hometown shows. But performing live lets me let go of all that. It's about tearing down walls and being completely myself. It's liberating."

ACROSS THE POND

Earlier this year, St. John and his band toured the UK,

and he was struck by the energy. "Incredible crowds, London in Camden Town was one of my favourite shows ever, people were screaming the songs back at me. It was beautiful. We filmed a live session at Findlater Castle in Aberdeenshire this thousand-year-old castle and then played Glasgow the next night. We even had a guy come up and play border pipes on Man of the North. It was wild."

ROOTED IN THE BLUES

"Every step of my career, I've pulled back to the blues. Even when the sound shifts, it's always built on blues chords and notes." That connection shines through on his latest album, *Man of the North*, a love letter to his roots. "It's about where I'm from, I live in Nashville now, but I miss home, the pine trees, the cold air. Over four years, I wrote songs that told the story of who I am and where I come from. When I wrote *Man of the North*, I knew that was the album. I texted my A&R right away and said, 'I feel complete.'"

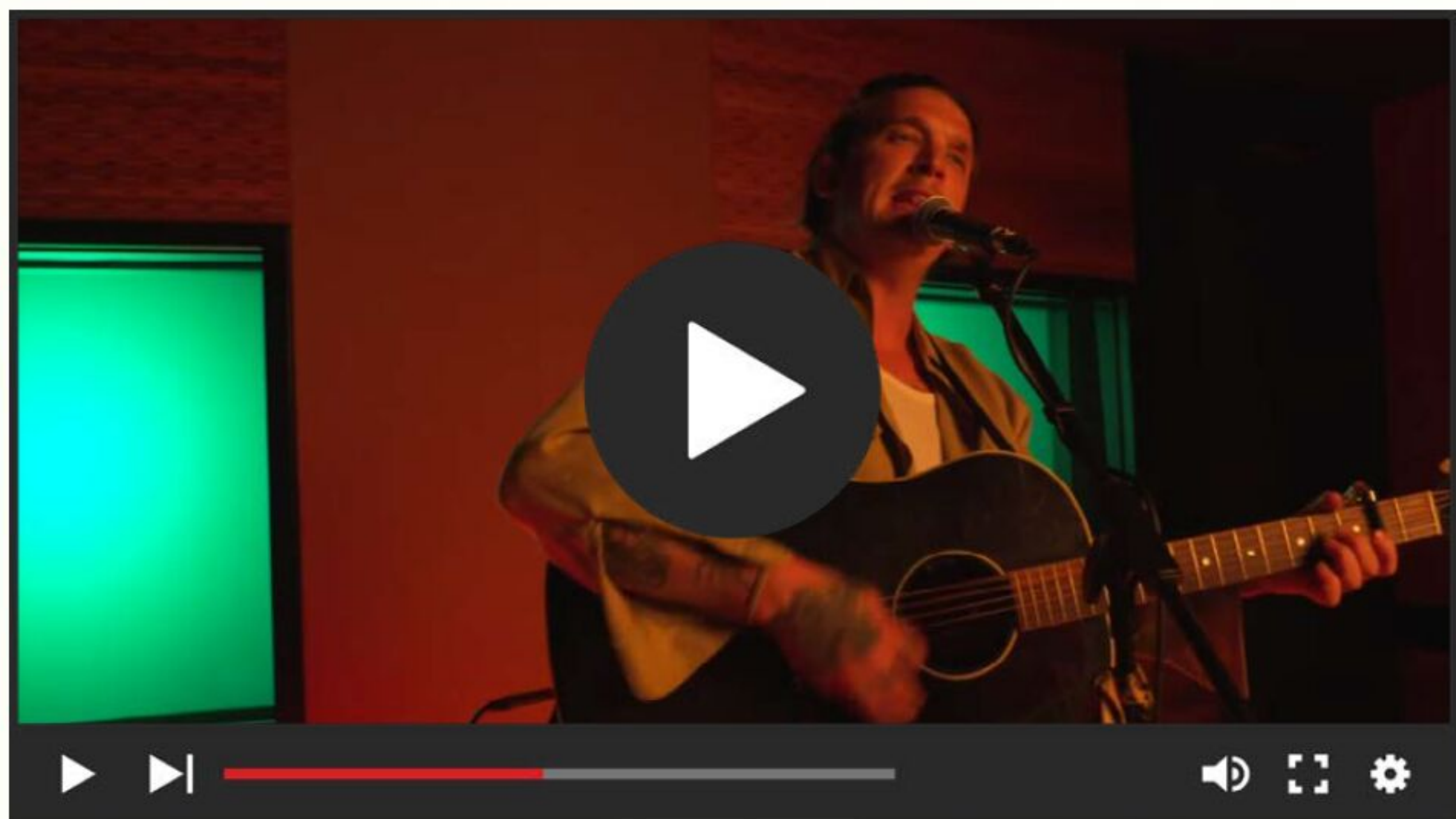
THE MYSTERY OF SONGWRITING

"Songwriting's a great mystery, every time I write one, I think I'll never write another. They come from nowhere. I sit down with my guitar and try to find a chord that captures how I feel. Melodies just appear. The more you do it, the more it comes."

His song *Believer* captures something more personal. "I don't usually write love songs," he admits. "But falling in love was such an intense, spiritual experience. Growing up in church, I saw it as something almost religious. I tried to capture that."

VOCAL POWER AND CONTROL

"Ray Charles was the first voice I fell in love with, then Steve Marriott from Humble Pie, Lowell George from Little Feat, Lauryn Hill, and Chris Stapleton." Though largely self-taught, he now works with a vocal coach. "When you're singing 54 shows on tour, it's important to protect your voice," he notes. "Technique helps me keep going night after night."



LIFE ON THE ROAD AND IN NASHVILLE

Touring can test anyone's sanity, but St. John's found his rhythm. "We're a tight group," he says. "The van gets cramped, but we make light of it. Days off, like today, I get to show the guys around my hometown and my mom's cooking dinner tonight. That makes it all feel human again."

He recently ticked off a bucket-list venue: "Playing the Basement East was huge for me," he beams. "Sometimes I'll pop up at dive bars like Dee's Country Bar or Robert's Western World, just to keep things loose. But I try not to overplay Nashville. I want every show to mean something."

A NEW KIND OF TOUR

Performing solo, Liam says, was intimate and raw, "just me and my guitar. It reminds me that it's human connection, not just me yelling at people for 90 minutes," he laughs. "But I love having a band now. It lets me loosen up and feed off everyone's energy. I'm also starting to play more electric guitar, taking leads and pushing the blues in new directions."

THEMES OF FAITH, FAMILY, AND REDEMPTION

The album is as much a confessional as it is a chronicle. "The theme really is opening up about everything in my life. I wrote a song about my mother too. She was always present and supportive, so it's the other side of that story."

"show up every day with humility and honesty,"

The record traces a journey through fatherlessness, faith, disillusionment, addiction, and ultimately, self-acceptance. "I tried to find what I was missing in religion and got let down by that. Then I turned to substances, which hurt my relationships. Eventually, I found peace with myself. When *Man of the North* comes in, the whole record shifts it turns toward hope."

BRINGING IT TO LIFE

"Releasing it was such a special moment, it's been four years in the making, really a lifetime in the making. We recorded it all live at Blue Room Studios in Nashville. I didn't want it to sound clean or artificial. I want people to hear the sweat and spirit." That live energy also fuels his collaborations, most notably with Grammy-winning bluegrass artist Molly Tuttle on *Greyhound Bus Blues*. "That was one of the coolest moments of my year," Liam says with a grin. "I'm a huge fan of Molly. My A&R texted me, 'Molly Tuttle's in,' and my jaw dropped. She came into the studio, knocked it out in 25 minutes, total pro. Then she even sat in for the album release show. A highlight."

RUNNING AND RECKONING

Reflective and candid, Liam admits much of his writing stems from a lifelong habit of escape. "I realised I had this pattern, every three years I'd pack up and leave. That's where *Greyhound Bus Blues* came from. It's me asking, what am I running from?"

Similarly, *Devil in Disguise* dives into self-doubt. "I wrote it in Montana on a retreat. It was one of the hardest songs to write not musically, but emotionally. I had to ask myself, am I a good man? Houndmouth featured on it and brought it to life in a whole new way. It's one of my favourites."

FINDING THE LIGHT

For Liam St. John, the blues isn't about despair it's about truth. "When you're honest and authentic, it speaks to the human soul," he says. "That's something you can't fake. I'm just grateful I get to share these stories and find connection through the music every night." From stripped-down stages to full-band fireworks, Liam's evolution feels like a homecoming not to a place, but to himself.

FINDING LIGHT IN THE DARK

Not all of Liam's songs dwell in pain. Paul Revere, co-written with his friend Dan, shows his playful side. "I wanted a song that was light-hearted, just talking my shit and having fun," he laughed. "We usually play it for

our encore. It's bombastic and a great way to end the show." But one of his most revealing tracks, Dipped In Bleach, remains a turning point in his songwriting.

"That was my life," he said candidly. "It was the first song where I really went there, being raw and honest lyrically. I had a lot of pain, guilt, and shame from the past. I figured I had nothing to lose, so I just said it. Turns out, people resonated with it. They'd say, 'I feel this,' and I realised I wasn't alone after all."

THE HEART OF THE BLUES

For Liam, that connection; artist to audience lies at the very soul of the blues. "Everything has to come from that authentic place inside your chest. If it's not honest and raw, it'll go over people's heads. The blues was born from deep pain and struggle, and I'm grateful it exists. Singing it helps me get the pain out of my chest. "That rawness attracts a surprisingly diverse audience. "I see military folks, punk and gothic fans, metalheads, country fans, it's a real melting pot," he shared. "People who say they don't usually like this kind of music are connecting to the unfiltered truth. That's the beautiful thing about music; if you're honest, you'll reach people from all walks of life."

ON SONGWRITING AND STAYING TRUE

When asked what advice he'd give to aspiring musicians, Liam didn't hesitate.

"As a songwriter, show up every day with humility and honesty, even when it hurts," he said. "People get hung up on 'making it' or waiting for the industry to notice them. But no one's going to make it happen for you. You must take steps, play open mics, build momentum. If I'd waited, I never would've found the team that's changing my life now. You just have to show up." That attitude defines his path. After earning a master's degree and working in digital marketing, Liam took a leap of faith.

"I quit that four years ago and bet it all on myself," he smiled. "Haven't looked back since. This is my purpose. Maybe in another life I'd be an extreme snowboarder or something, I love snow sports, but this is where I'm meant to be."

THE BLUES FINDS THOSE WHO NEED IT

"The blues is the foundation of everything we listen to. Especially now, when times are hard, it's the music that brings people together. You can hear it in today's trends; unfiltered, honest lyrics and sound. People might call it country, but we know where country came from. The blues is at the root of it all. More than ever, we need people

singing their blues and speaking their truth". His latest project, a sixteen-track album originally intended to be twenty songs is only the beginning. "We had to cut a few, but that's the blessing and curse of being a songwriter. I'm already thinking about the next record, but I want to give this one its moment."

Before signing off, Liam reflected on what the blues means to him. "Thank you to the blues it saved my life," he said quietly. "The blues finds those who need it. It found a little boy in Spokane, Washington, and I'm forever grateful. Blues matters, because I wouldn't be here without it." For further details see website: <https://liamstjohn.com/>



EXPLORE



GET IT WHILE IT'S HOT

HENRI HERBERT

Few modern pianists channel the raw fire and joy of the greats quite like Henri Herbert. Born in France, raised in England, and now based between Austin and Nashville, his journey has taken him from school talent shows to viral videos, from dockyards to rock and roll stages across the globe. When Blues Matters caught up with him in Austin, the conversation flowed as freely as his boogie-woogie runs.

✍ Colin Campbell

📷 Sean-Murphy-Austin

ROOTS AND INSPIRATION

"I was born in France but grew up in England, and I've been living in America for about five years. My musical journey really began when I heard Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard on my dad's records. From the age of four or five I was hooked."

Soon came Muddy Waters, Otis Spann, Memphis Slim and Champion Jack Dupree, followed by Professor Longhair, Dr. John and James Booker. "Even now in Austin and Nashville, I've got an ear on what's living and breathing there. The blues is still a living thing."

FROM EARLY GIGS TO THE REVUE

After a few piano lessons at six, Henri soon found his own path. By his teens he was playing solo around Essex, later moving to London and performing with The Cadillac Kings, The Moonlighters and The Fallen Heroes. "That was great training, learning the flat keys to play with the horns."

Then came The Jim Jones Revue, a rock and roll band

powered by punk attitude. "That was a whole other thing for me. We toured hard for three years and even played the David Letterman Show."

MAKING THE RECORD

Henri's debut band album Get It While It's Hot grew out of lockdown sessions in Austin. "During COVID I started writing songs, some old, some new. We'd jam in my buddy's backyard—me, drummer Tom Lewis, bassist Kevin Smith from Willie Nelson's band, and guitarist Tjarko Jeen. We ended up with 30 or 40 songs."

Those backyard jams became gigs, then a record mixed by Jim Jones. "We just put mics down and played live. I'm really proud of it."

SONGS AND STORIES

Two standout tracks show different sides of Henri's life. Cold City Blues recalls his time working as a docker in Harwich and London: "That song's about struggle and self-belief, making things happen when no one else will." Guilty Pleasures is "a love letter to Motown and not caring what's cool... Music should move you; that's it."





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LIVE AND ALIVE

For Henri, the real magic is on stage. “Records are cool, but the best thing is a ripping band playing their songs live. I love exchanging energy with the audience. I’ve been to Japan, Australia, Eastern Europe—it’s always the same connection.”

He’s performed everywhere from royal theatres to punk bars. “One week I played for the Royal Family of Monaco, the next I was stage-diving off a piano in Italy. It’s not about where you are, it’s about the vibe.”

HOME AND FUTURE

“The 100 Club in London is my favourite venue in the world,” he says. “Jerry Lee Lewis played that piano—you can feel the history.” Across the Atlantic, Austin has become another home. “I came here for South by Southwest in 2016 and fell in love with the city. All the stuff I’d listened to all my life was actually happening right here.” Now living on a ranch near Austin, Henri keeps busy. “Sometimes I roll the piano out and play for the animals—it keeps me inspired.” His street-performance videos have also gone viral, clocking up millions of views.

FAMOUS FRIENDS

Alongside *Get It While It’s Hot*, Henri is working on *Famous Friends*, a collaborative album with Rebirth Brass Band, Sunny Sweeney, Ian Siegal, Ben Waters and Chuck Leavell of the Rolling Stones. “It’s about celebrating friendship and the people I’ve made music with along the way.”

THE SPIRIT OF THE BLUES

“For me, the blues is emotion, a feeling,” he says. “It’s in Muddy Waters and Howlin’ Wolf, but also in soul, jazz, country and hip hop. It’s bigger than music—it’s part of who we are.”

Before signing off, Henri smiles: “If you like the story, check out the record and come see me play live somewhere. I’ll be very happy to see you.”

“It’s about celebrating friendship and the people I’ve made music with along the way”

EXPLORE





CHRISTONE

KINGFISH

INGRAM

SETTING HIS OWN COURSE

Christone “Kingfish” Ingram is 25, hungry, and building his own lane. When we connect, he has good news to share. His next chapter arrives on Red Zero Records, the imprint he founded with manager Rick Whitmore. The idea took shape back in 2019. The purpose is simple. Create a home that can lift young and veteran blues voices who deserve a bigger stage.

✎ Stephen Harrison 📷 Jen Rosenstein & others

“I want to create an avenue for other artists,” he says. “Young and old. That is the whole plan.” Two of the first names he mentions are soul-blues singer Dylan Triplett from St. Louis and Houston guitarist Matthias Latin, an IBC winner. More signings are in the works.

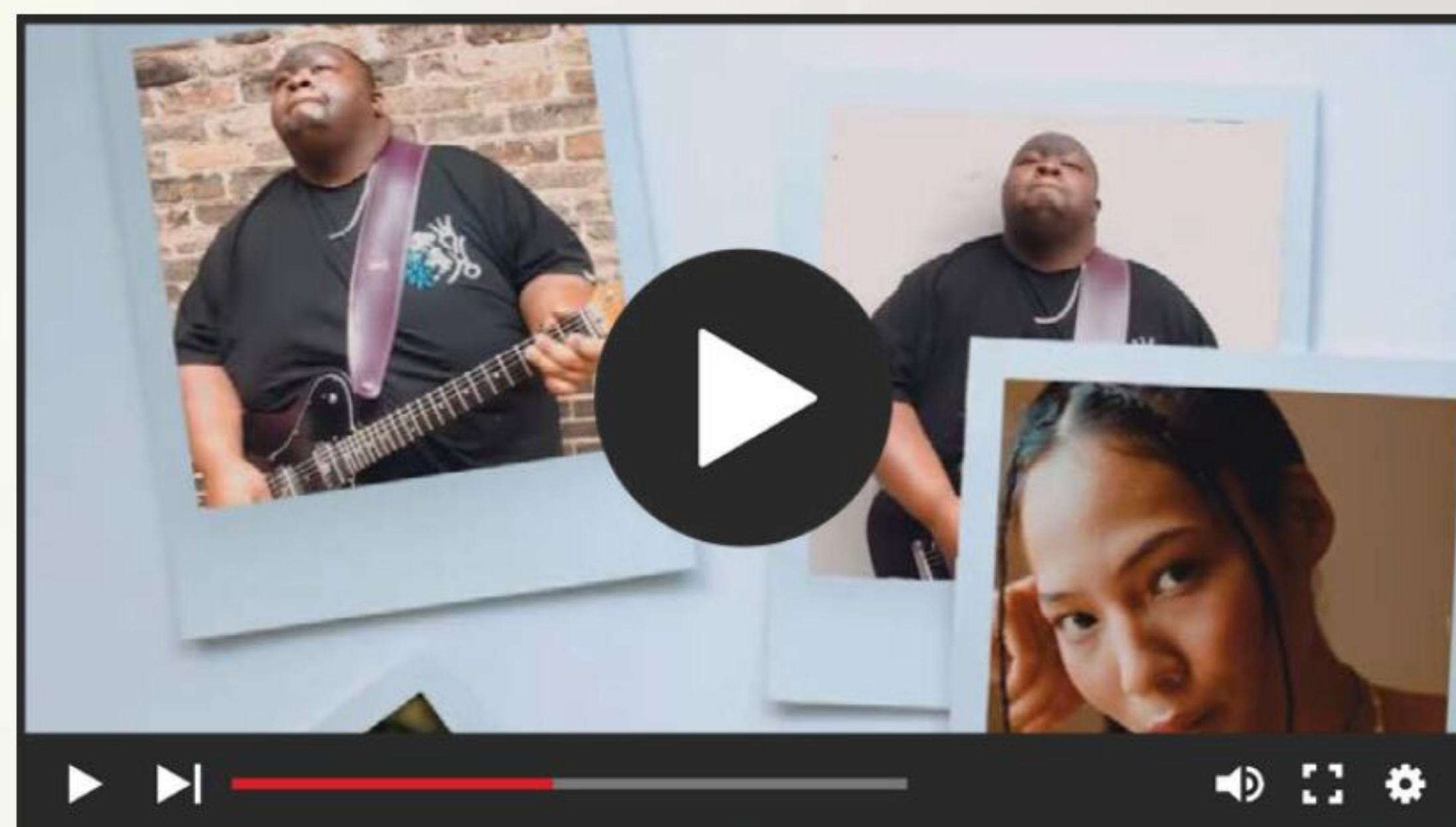
Red Zero’s name is a nod to the rooms that raised him. “Red comes from Red’s Blues Club. Zero comes from Ground Zero,” he explains. Both sit in Clarksdale, Mississippi, the town where Kingfish grew up, learned, and started turning heads as a teenager.

A LABEL LAUNCH AND A NEW RECORD

The label launches with Hard Road, a record that folds the many shades of Kingfish into one set. Some songs date back to the 662 sessions. Others took shape in Nashville and Los Angeles over the last few years, cut between tours and cross-country flights. “Making the music did not take long,” he says. “Finishing it took time because I was on the road and bouncing between Mississippi and LA.”

Tom Hambridge returns as a key hand in the studio, just as he did on Kingfish’s debut and the Grammy-winning 662. Kingfish also brought in producer Nick “Ghost” to shape singles like Empty Promises and the tribute he cut for his mum on Rock and Roll. For the R&B-leaning corners, he





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 **YOUTUBE**





“If the Crossroads moment happened, it was not where those guitars stand”

turned to Patrick “Guitarboy” Hayes, a go-to name for artists from Keith Sweat to Chris Brown. That mix of cooks is intentional. “The blues will always be my foundation,” he says. “But I wanted to show my range. Each album needs to show growth.”

Spin Hard Road and you hear that mission land. There is blues, soul, funk, and R&B in the gumbo. The guitars still bite. The voice stretches further. The songs are built to connect. “One way to attract young people is to mix it up,” he says. “Give them something that makes them ask What is that. Then teach them about the real and raw thing.”

GOSPEL ROOTS, DELTA SCHOOL

Music was constant in the Ingram house. His mother led a quartet called the Supreme Angels. Uncles sang in the Sensational Travelers. “I was always around gospel music. That quartet sound was there all the time,” he says. He is also related to Charley Pride on his mother’s side, another thread in a long family line.

Gospel came first. Blues followed quickly. At the Delta Blues Museum Arts Programme, he met the late Bill “Howlin’ Mad” Perry. Perry gave him the nickname Kingfish. He drilled the kids on space, time, and volume. “He would get on us about rushing. He taught us how to control dynamics,” Kingfish says. He actually started on bass because six-string strings felt too tight for his young hands. By 13, he had shifted back to guitar, taking the groove he learned on bass and applying it to chords and solos.

His ear widened as he grew. Early on, it was Son House, Robert Johnson, Robert Nighthawk, Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, B.B., Freddie, and Albert. Then came Otis Rush, Magic Sam, and Magic Slim. Later, he folded in Ernie Isley, George Benson, Hendrix, Prince, and modern heavy hitters like Eric Gales and Lance Lopez. The map is wide, but the compass points to the same place.

MYTHS, CROSSROADS, AND THE WORK

Clarksdale is home to a famous set of guitars on poles that mark “the crossroads.” Kingfish smiles when the legend comes up. As a kid, he loved the story. As a grown artist, he sees it differently. “Some of those stories were made for marketing,” he says. “People get made mythical when really they just went to practice. If the Crossroads moment happened, it was not where those guitars stand.”

He is not cynical about any of it. He is practical. “No one will ever truly know. That is part of what keeps the conversation going,” he says. Then he puts the focus back on craft. Practice for a year. Put in the hours. See what can happen.

ELECTRIC FIRE, ACOUSTIC TRUTH

Plenty discovered Kingfish through the high-voltage shows and the shredding that lives on his first two records. He is quick to say the raw stuff is still in him. “Delta and country blues were the foundation of how I learned,” he says. “I have so much fun playing acoustic. People think I came in as the blues-rock shred guy, but I had to go from A to B. My A was that traditional style.”

That breadth will shape his next steps. The Hard Road sessions left enough music for another record, maybe two. Alongside that, he is writing an acoustic blues album and a gospel album. Writing itself has become a bigger part of his toolkit. The museum taught him to play. Co-writes and guidance from the likes of Keb’ Mo’ and Tom Hambridge taught him how to frame stories. “Now I know how to paint a picture the audience can feel and relate to,” he says.

BUDDY, LEGENDS, AND A SCENE THAT NEEDS A SPARK

Few modern blues artists have a deeper stamp of approval than Buddy Guy. Kingfish’s friendship with Buddy led him to Hambridge and into the orbit of Chicago’s Legends club. “Seeing my name on that marquee with his was humbling,” he says. Buddy’s new album features Kingfish on the cut *Where You At*. “Mr. Guy never misses,” he grins.

Ask him about the state of the music, and he is clear. The blues are not dead. It has a loyal base and a slow-burning resurgence. Cruises, festivals, films, books, records, and magazines all help. “Anything that keeps the blues alive, I am behind it,” he says. That is also why Red Zero matters. It gives him a way to bring in fresh voices and keep the circle unbroken.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Touring continues. Hard Road gets its run. Writing sessions stack up. When time allows, he heads back to Clarksdale to play, support the museum, and keep ties strong. The kid who once sat in class at the Delta Blues Museum is now building platforms for the next kids in line. The mission is bigger than one record.

“The blues will always be my foundation,” Kingfish says. “I want to show growth. I want to bring new ears in. And I want to give other artists a shot.” That is how you turn a hard road into a highway.





EXPLORE





DION – THE ROCK 'N' ROLL PHILOSOPHER

I recently reviewed Dion's new album *The Rock'n'Roll Philosopher* which is a companion piece for his recent book of the same name written in collaboration with his long-time friend Adam Jablin. The book is filled with short stories, anecdotes and references to Dion's past with a philosophical observation attached.

✍ Steve Yourglivch 📷 David Godlis

It's almost a self-help guide from a man who has earned huge respect and lived a full life. Dion is now 86 years old; he looks and acts about 50. He is fit, bright and lives in the now. He has released meaningful and successful music in every decade since the fifties and continues to do so. He had huge success as a young man, gave into the trappings of that life-style but has been sober for 57 years and his religion is an important part of who he is. We connected via zoom recently to talk about his latest project.

I start by asking Dion about the tracks selected for the album. The book covers such a lot of his history that there was easily enough material for a double disc:

"I know what you mean, yeah, there's a lot of songs in the book - I think maybe 60. I got very inspired doing the audible book, there's a lot of songs in the hardcover, but I just wanted to put something out that was kind of like a diary of my life. Stuff that would connect everything, like *Gangster Of Love*, I was doing this little presentation for this middle school here in Florida, and I was sitting on the stage, and, you know, it was an auditorium. These kids are like 14, 15, and I told them about this song. I told them when I was your age, I was watching black-and-white TV of Humphrey Bogart and James Cagney, you know, portraying these gangsters like Al Capone and John Dillinger and Lucky Luciano, and they had these Tommy guns, rat-ta-ta, ta-ta. So, I said, in the blues, a genre that I said I love because you could express anything you want in within this structure within this form of music that I believe is God-given, every time I put an album together there's

this theme, that I call bragging rights blues. In my mind it started with Muddy Waters, *I'm A Hoochie Coochie Man* and the like, it's kind of satire."

"I explained that every time I do an album, I have to write a bragging rights song like *The Wanderer* or *I'm The King Of New York Streets*. Or *Baby, Don't You Want A Man Like Me* or of course *I'm The Gangster Of Love*. So, I said, this one's on the new album, and I sing the song, and they went absolutely nuts. They went crazy. It was just me and my guitar. They went crazy. They loved it. I hadn't recorded it yet, so I thought, well, I did do a rendition of it on an album called *New York Is My Home*, sometimes you do a song, and it's not living where you want it to be. So, I did another version of it. I went in and did it kind of close to the version I did for them. I just recorded it and made a little video of it. And I sent it to the school. I said, I did this for you. So that's why I put it first on the album. I figured if 15-year-old kids like it, anybody will like it."

Dion has included a good selection of tracks from his more recent albums too, featuring collaborations with many of musical friends:

"I love what Mark Knopfler did with *Dancing Girl*, it's one of my favourite songs, And Joe Bonamassa, he just kills me, so I gotta put that on, and Eric Clapton, I'll be honest with you, when he played on *If You Want to Rock and Roll*, I called him, I said, Eric, you sound like you're 19 years old on this song."



“He said, Dion, because I sent him the track and he went into the studio with the track, he said, I stood up, I stood up for you, I wasn’t sitting, so I thanked him for that, I gotta put that on, I love that.”

There’s a couple of tracks recorded with a band called The Little Kings featuring Scott Kempner who was connected to The Dictators and The Del-Lords. I hadn’t been aware of them before:

“Dion & The Little Kings. I love Scott, he just passed, we were dear friends. He was a great lyricist, a great arranger, and the dynamic rocker, he flew, he was a true rock and roller, he flew under the radar, totally, but when he played, he was in, he was all in, and I always loved guys like that, because when I started out as a kid, Hank Williams was like that, when he sang a lyric, at the end of the sentence, he would grab the word with his mouth, and just rip it off, he would, like, dig in, and he was so committed emotionally, mentally, spiritually, physically, and that was Scott Kempner. When he did stuff, he was totally, nothing tentative about him, so we started this group called Little Kings. I’ll be honest with you, Steve, you wouldn’t believe this. We’re working at the Mercury Lounge on Houston Street in Greenwich Village, and this guy, I still don’t know who he is to this day, walked in with a console, five-track console, and recorded us, it

***“When I was younger,
I cared too much
about what people
thought about me.
Once I got over that,
I found real freedom”***

would have been lost. The whole thing would have been lost. So, we had the tape, it was like two guitars, bass, and drums, and my vocal. So, I recently, I looked at that album, and I pulled, In A Heartbeat Of Time, because Scott and I always loved that song - King of the New York Streets was on that album. They’re both live recordings. But, nowadays, with the equipment we have, my engineer, he kind of lifted my voice out and made it sound like I walked into the studio, and I just recorded it. He was able to lift it out and make it richer and wider and, you know, EQ it in a certain way where you could hear the words better and it didn’t sound lost. It sounds compatible with the rest of the album. I was happy about that; it made the songs fresh for me.”

“The band wasn’t together very long. In the mid-90s. I met up with Scott. I had a little apartment in New York, we got together, we wrote about 16 songs, and then we got Frank Funaro on drums, and Mike Mesaros on bass, and we went out and just played these little clubs, just for the fun of it. We did like a little tour around New York, Jersey, and Philly, and I don’t know, maybe we did nine gigs, and that was it. I wanted to do that just to get my blood flowing.”

“That’s the reason I got into this business in the first place. It’s, like I said about the blues, it’s a genre that’s rich and real and raw and people just jump in with both feet, with their heart, they pour themselves in, it’s the one real music around today.”

I found that interesting, there’s a part in the book where Dion talks about that. Drive and energy can sustain somebody in the early part of their career but later you need to find different motivations:

“I was saying that rock and rollers, we can start as outsiders, we’re pissed off, we’re driven by a lot of anger sometimes, and frustration, or loss, whatever it is, it gets you going. But you come into your 40s, and somewhere along the line, if you don’t look at that, what’s motivating you, it’ll kill you. If you find out and look at it, and deal with it, and lean into it, and recognize it, and it doesn’t become that important anymore. When I was younger, I cared too much about what people thought about me. When I got over that, and I said, Gee, I don’t have to worry about that because I knew why I was being driven. My father never had a real job, and people used to put him down, and I felt like they were going to do that to me, and I was like, trying to protect myself.”

Until I read the book I hadn’t known how the album Kick-in’ Child, that Columbia refused to release, impacted on Dion and his career. He soon put me straight on that:

“I recorded that album in the 60s. They didn’t want to put it out, so I left Columbia. I was the first rock and roller signed to Columbia Records, and then Dylan came up, and I saw all his sessions. Tom Wilson did that album, and Al Kooper was playing on it. But, you know, Steve, I was



a junkie when I was young. I was taking drugs. I wasn't in the greatest place, and it got worse emotionally. I always attached all those bad feelings I had about the company and about what happened to that album."

"One day, Miriam Linna from Norton Records, found it in the vaults of Columbia, and they took it out, and they said, would you mind if we put it out? She sent me a CD of it, and I threw it in my CD player in my truck as I'm driving across Florida to do something for a friend. I was listening to that album, and it blew my mind. I said, my God, none of what I thought this album was, is, you know, it's really artistic. It's not trite. It was all live. Everything was live just with the band. I called Al Kooper. I said, do you know, Al, the guy that was in that room playing bass had been playing bass for three months? I Pete Falciglia a friend of mine. Carlos Mastrangelo from the Belmonts was playing drums, Johnny Falbo was on guitar. Al Kooper said to me, damn, there were no bad musicians in that room when we did that album. So, I listened to it and I thought this thing is artistic, it's good, and it did something for me. I thought, wow, you know, personally I was going through such a bad time, but the music never suffered, I was always honest there, I might have been full of shit and a lot of other things, but the music was always honest."

Another often overlooked Dion album that the book reminds me of is Tankful Of Blues:

"With Tankful Of Blues nobody was bothering me or telling me what to do, so I wrote songs like Tank Full of Blues, you know... I got a woman that really wants me and I got another that wants me gone.

I thought how come nobody wrote a song like that. There's no bass on it. I just went in with my guitar and did very simple songs, you know, grassroots. I'm just going to do these songs that I like, what I grew up listening to."

"The early blues guys always resonated with me, Lightnin' Hopkins, it just does something to my soul when I hear those guys, Robert Johnson or Son House. It always did and always will. It's just what's in the centre of my being, that kind of music. When I first heard Hank Williams and Jimmy Reed, what they did for me, my whole life has been trying to transmit that feeling that I got from them to everybody. I want to get a song together and I want to transmit it to you. I want you to feel what I felt as a 10 or 11-year-old."

I had to make a confession to Dion, I was a bit of a Lou Reed fan, and his New York album is my favourite of his and I had never realised Dion did some vocals on the track Dirty Blvd until I read it in the book:

"I was doing an album called Yo Frankie, and Lou Reed came upstairs and says, come on downstairs, I want you to do something at the end of the song. He plays it and he goes, just sing, you know, fly or something. So, I sing something on it and he goes, yeah, that's good. I said, okay, run the tape. He said, no, that's good. I love Lou, man. We got along. He was a good guy. He used to like to

"Even when I was a mess, the music was always honest"

throw people curveballs or get them going. He just wanted to see what was real, see what was genuine, that's why he liked me."

We have been talking about music and flitting between the album and the book so I thought it was important to hear more about Adam Jablin:

"I met Adam when he was just a young boy. Again, I was singing at a middle school, I met him there. I was singing Run Around Sue, and some gospel tunes, because it was St. Joan of Arc School here in Boca. Later on, at 33, he got clean and sober, so we were both on that journey, and we would tell each other stories. Then we thought, these stories are interesting enough, like reflecting on events in our lives. That's what the book is, reflecting on events in our lives and it comes out with a life lesson. There's like 60 stories in the book with a little life lesson, like the difference between success and fulfilment. Or character and reputation, freedom and license. He's a good guy. We're good friends."

The most recent thing Dion is involved with is Joe Bonamassa's tribute to BB King, celebrating what would have been BB's 100th birthday:

"He got me to do Never Make You Move Too Soon. I mean, I pasted it together pretty quickly, but I love that song. I just love that song."

Dion's new album "The Rock 'N' Roll Philosopher" is released by KTBA Records and is available from www.diondimucci.com

EXPLORE



THE BIG BLUES CHART

THE TOP 50 BLUES ALBUMS

POS	ARTIST	ALBUM	LABEL
#1	BUDDY GUY	AIN'T DONE WITH THE BLUES	RCA RECORDS SILVERTONE
#2	CANDICE IVORY	NEW SOUTHERN VINTAGE	NOLA BLUE
#3	BILLY BRANCH & THE SONS OF BLUES	THE BLUES IS MY BIOGRAPHY	ROSA'S LOUNGE RECORDS
#4	MONSTER MIKE WELCH	KEEP LIVING TIL I DIE	SELF-RELEASE
#5	KIRK FLETCHER	KEEP ON PUSHING	VIZZTONE LABEL GROUP
#6	TOM HAMBRIDGE	DOWN THE HATCH	QUARTO VALLEY RECORDS
#7	DEVON ALLMAN	THE BLUES SUMMIT	RUF RECORDS
#8	MIKE ZITO AND ALBERT CASTIGLIA	HELP YOURSELF	GULF COAST RECORDS
#9	D.K. HARRELL	TALKIN' HEAVY	ALLIGATOR RECORDS
#10	PIPER & THE HARD TIMES	GOOD COMPANY	SELF
#11	MUD MORGANFIELD	DEEP MUD	NOLA BLUE RECORDS
#12	YATES MCKENDREE	NEED TO KNOW	QUALIFIED
#13	JOHNNIE JOHNSON	I'M JUST JOHNNIE	MISSOURI MORNING RECORDS
#14	CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE	LOOK OUT HIGHWAY	FORTY BELOW
#15	MARIA MULDAUR	ONE HOUR MAMA	NOLA BLUE
#16	ROOMFUL OF BLUES	STEPPIN' OUT	ALLIGATOR
#17	CHAMBERS DESLAURIERS	OUR TIME TO RIDE	FORTY BELOW
#18	LARRY MCCRAY	HEARTBREAK CITY	THE BLUES ALIVE
#19	THE BONESHAKERS	LIVE TO BE THIS	GULF COAST RECORDS
#20	KENT BURNSIDE	HILL COUNTRY BLOOD	STROLLING BONES
#21	RORY BLOCK	HEAVY ON THE BLUES	M.C. RECORDS
#22	TAJ MAHAL & KEB' MO'	ROOM ON THE PORCH	CONCORD
#23	BB & THE BULLETS	HIGH TIDE	DIXIEFROG
#24	BOBBY RUSH, KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD ...	DEEP RUSH	RAM RECORDS
#25	GARRY BURNSIDE	IT'S MY TIME NOW	STROLLING BONES
#26	MIKE HENDERSON	LAST NITE AT THE BLUEBIRD LIVE	QUALIFIED RECORDS
#27	BRANDON SANTINI	WHICH WAY DO WE GO?	MOMOJO RECORDS
#28	SOUTHERN AVENUE	FAMILY	ALLIGATOR RECORDS
#29	JOHN CHRISTOPHER MORGAN	RIGHT ON TIME	SELF-RELEASE
#30	CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM	HARD ROAD	RED ZERO RECORDS
#31	JOHN PRIMER	GROWN IN MISSISSIPPI	BLUES HOUSE
#32	WILLIE BUCK & BOB CORRITORE	OH YEAH!	VIZZTONE SWMAF
#33	MOTHER BLUES WITH GERALD MCCLENDON	SLEEPING WHILE THE RIVER RUNS	SLEEPING DOG RECORDS
#34	BIG SHOES	KING SIZE	QUALIFIED RECORDS
#35	ANGELIQUE FRANCIS	NOT DEFEATED	S R
#36	ANA POPOVIC	DANCE TO THE RHYTHMN	ELECTRIC HEEL RECORDS
#37	MIKE FARRIS	THE SOUND OF MUSCLE SHOALS	FAME ENTERPRISES
#38	TOMMY CASTRO & THE PAINKILLERS	CLOSER TO THE BONE	ALLIGATOR
#39	CAROLYN WONDERLAND	TRUTH IS	ALLIGATOR
#40	BRANDON ISAAK	WALKIN' WITH THE BLUES	SELF-RELEASE
#41	ERIC GALES	A TRIBUTE TO LJK	PROVOGUE
#42	THE ALEXIS P. SUTER BAND	JUST STAY HIGH	NOLA BLUE RECORDS
#43	VARIOUS ARTISTS	ANTONES: 50 YEARS OF THE BLUES	ANTONE'S RECORDS
#44	POPA CHUBBY	I LOVE FREDDIE KING	GULF COAST
#45	JIMI "PRIME TIME" SMITH	IT'S MY TIME	NEW FOLK
#46	DEBBIE BOND	LIVE AT THE SONG THEATER	BLUES ROOT
#47	WALTER TROUT	SIGN OF THE TIMES	PROVOGUE RECORDS
#48	MISSISSIPPI HEAT	DON'T LOOK BACK	DELMARK RECORDS
#49	GA-20	ORPHANS	COLEMINE RECORDS
#50	MIKEY JUNIOR	TRIBUTE TO ALECK RICE MILLER	8TH TRAIN



KEEPING THE ZYDECO FLAME BURNING

CJ CHENIER

In his day Clifton Chenier was more than just the most famous and recognisable exponent of Zydeco music across the globe, he was one of the most famous musicians regardless of genre or style.

✍ Steve Yourglivch 📷 Supplied

His influence can be measured by the fact that the then fledgling label Alligator Records released his 1982 album *I'm Here*. Founder Bruce Iglauer had previously stuck rigidly to more pure blues artists, however it was *I'm Here* that was the label's first Grammy winning artist.

Clifton was already battling major health problems when recording *I'm Here*, and his young son CJ Chenier performed on the album, playing saxophone. Clifton sadly passed in December 1987 but by then had groomed CJ to take over his role as leader of the Red Hot Louisiana Band that had served him so well. Almost forty years on and CJ still leads the band, touring extensively and continuing to lead the band in the studio for a further five albums plus live releases and a couple of solo releases.

I caught up with CJ recently to talk about his career and the roots of Zydeco. I wondered if there was any new releases in the pipeline.

'Not at the moment. I've been on a 12-year hiatus from recording. The last album was *Can't Sit Down*. We've been touring regularly though and I intend to keep going.'

I had been surprised, given his family and Zydeco's strong links to Louisiana, to discover that CJ was actually born and brought up in Texas.

'I was born in a place called Fort Arthur in Texas, my dad was working there at that time. As I grew up, I was aware of my father's music but didn't really listen to it. I had no

idea how popular he was. I loved soul, jazz and funk really, you know people like James Brown, Funkadelic, Miles Davis, John Coltrane. In fact, when I first heard Zydeco music, I thought it all sounded the same.'

Still living in Fort Arthur in the early 70's CJ learnt to play the sax. He soon found himself performing in black top 40 bands on the local circuit. By the mid-70's CJ attended college to study music at Texas Southern University. It was in 1978 that Clifton invited his son to join him in the Red Hot Louisiana Band, initially as sax player. CJ's uncle Cleveland Chenier was also a band on washboard.

'When I joined and moved to Louisiana, I fully expected that long time sax player John Hart would still be there too. He was one of my idols. But he had left the band, so it ended up being just me. I was used to playing funk, not zydeco so I emulated John Hart's style at first, then gradually developed my own approach. That was 1978, a week before I turned 21.'

On the road his father began showing CJ how to front a world class touring band, how to run the family business as it were and to have the skills to turn his passion for music into a career. I asked CJ how difficult it was recording with the band in those early days.

'I ended up recording on three albums with my father. It was a new experience for me as I had never recorded before. The band members were very patient with me and gave me the chance to learn the ropes. I was very much the youngest member of the band, the others were all



at least ten years older. I was treated just like any other band member, definitely no special treatment.'

Clifton Chenier died in 1987 following a few years of diminishing health due to diabetes. He increasingly wanted CJ to take on the mantle of band leader, a daunting prospect to take over from the man known as The King Of Zydeco.

'As he felt increasingly unwell he expressed that I needed to take over. I was stubbornly opposed to the idea initially but eventually I embraced Zydeco music and playing the accordion. I had two years of piano lessons in second grade and started saxophone in fourth grade. Adapting to button accordion was certainly challenging, especially learning the 120 bass notes! Becoming front man for the band wasn't as difficult as it might have been because I had already been opening shows for my father. The band all chose to continue with me which was a huge vote of confidence. Establishing my own identity was challenging but when I started playing my own music the audience kept returning.'

Zydeco music has its own unique place as a genre, something that CJ feels at times has held him and the music generally back.



'Zydeco evolved from LaLa music, which was Creole music. Clifton Chenier added blues, boogie and other elements to LaLa creating Zydeco. Zydeco is more bluesy and high energy than its close relative Cajun, which is more Country. My father recorded one album with Alligator Records, I did three albums with them. The label was very blues focused but my music was placed in the world music section which definitely hurt sales. I received one Grammy nomination, Zydeco had it's own category for four or five years but I hadn't recorded during that time. When I was nominated we were merged in with Regional Roots Music.'

It's clear after talking to CJ for just a short while that preserving his fathers legacy and the well being of Zydeco music in general is something he is passionate about and dedicated to. I asked CJ how tough that is with younger musicians and changing trends.

'Yeah, you know it's only me and the drummer left from the original line up I joined, the rest are all younger musicians. I stay true to the Chenier style, ensuring my music is danceable and authentic. I want audiences to know what to expect and have a good time. The responsibility is

"Becoming front man for the band wasn't as difficult as it might have been because I had already been opening shows for my father"

mostly on me because younger musicians play a different style. I continue with traditional Chenier music and won't follow current trends. My father created this trend, and I followed along. He was the originator. He was considered to be the BB King or Muddy Waters of Zydeco. I met many blues legends in my 20's while with my father, and I'm proud of that history. They respected us as Zydeco musicians.

CJ has also performed alongside Paul Simon and others across his career.

Paul Simon heard me playing in 1990 and called me to record one track on his The Rhythm Of The Saints album. He was a perfectionist, and it took all day. I played a concert with him but couldn't do the whole tour due to commitments with my own band. I toured with Joe Sample (Jazz Crusaders) for his Zydeco CD 'Creole Joe' with Ray Parker and a load of other top musicians touring Japan and the East Coast. I also recorded with The Gin Blossoms on their track Cajun Song. With The Red Hot Louisiana Band I've toured all over Europe especially through the 90's, including Azerbaijan, Macedonia, Slovenia, Spain, Denmark and the UK. You know I'm always on the road, I've been performing since I was 20 years old and I'm still active and going strong.

As we concluded our conversation I asked CJ if there was anything he wanted to add.

'Just that I want Zydeco music to get the recognition it deserves. It has a huge audience and should be more mainstream but the industry hasn't pushed it. If promoted like pop music it would be widely popular.'

If you aren't familiar with the bluesy side of Zydeco give it a listen, you might be up and dancing before you know it!

BIG BLUES REVIEWS



CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM

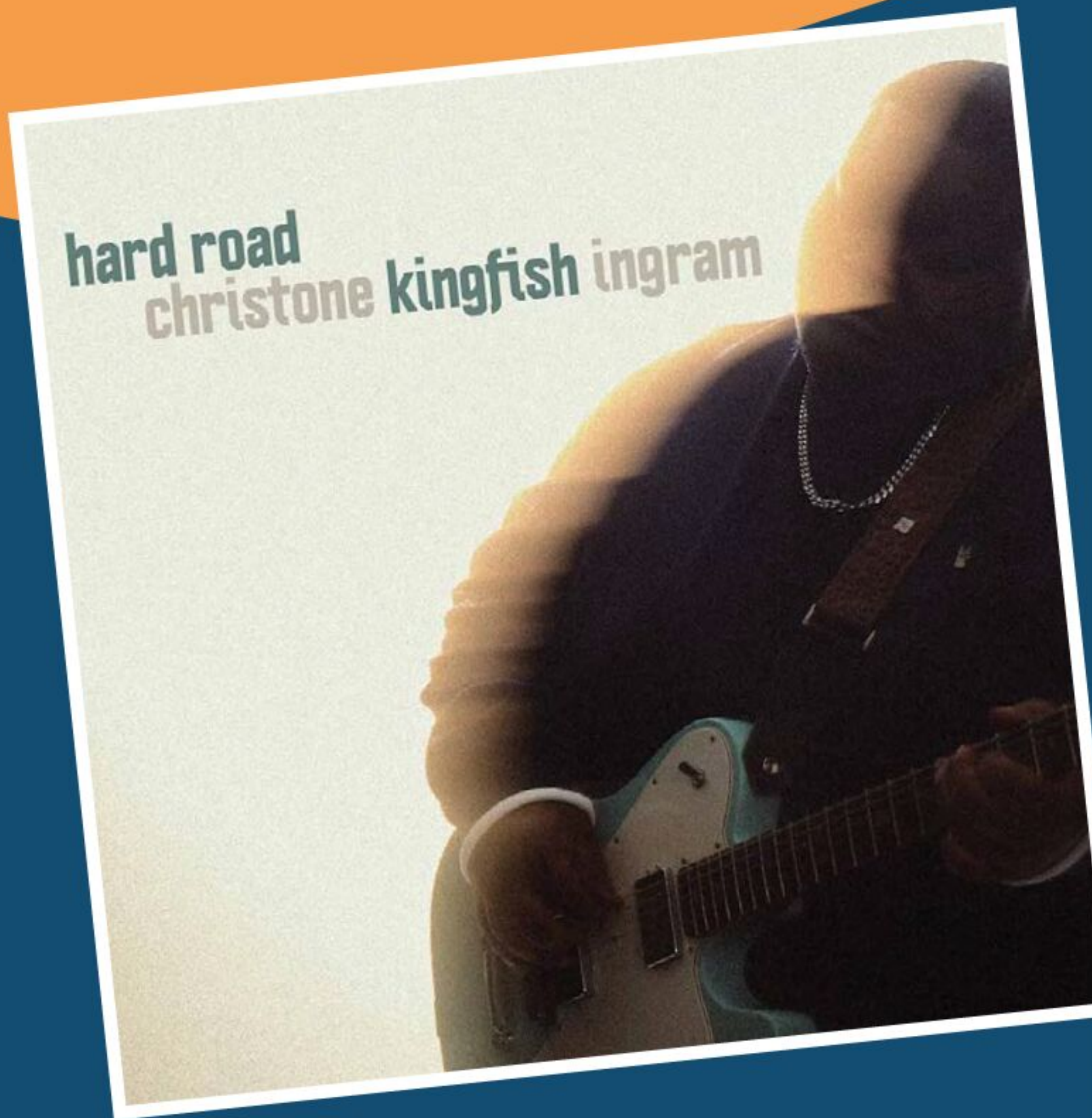
HARD ROAD

Red Zero Records

This is the fourth album release from "Kingfish", but it just so happens to be the first to be released on his own record label. Now, this might not be monumental news, but the record label has been set up to help and look after Blues artists and to ensure that they are never ripped off. Christone has teamed up with Tom Hambridge

"Hard Road is what you might call the complete Blues, Soul, Funk, and Gospel album"

here as co-writer and producer. Now, Tom Hambridge is probably the most inundated guy in the Blues world right now; his CV must be a mile long. Hard Road has eleven songs that tell tales of how and where Christone grew up, obtained his musical background, and all of the things that have helped to shape what kind of musician he is today. The album opens with, Truth, a funky, hard-riff kind of song, with Christone belting



out the lyrics as if his very life depended on it. Nothin' But Your Love veers away from the Blues/Rock/Funk side of things to allow us to listen to a love song, I don't mean sugary pop stuff, but a really meaningful Soul ballad. Crosses has the feel of the soil from the Delta; you can almost smell it through the lyrics. Back To LA is a kind of musical history lesson detailing everything that "Kingfish" has learned in his relatively short career. The closing song, Memphis, is a wonderful acoustic Blues tune demonstrating that not only is he probably the best electric Blues player around, his talents also extend acoustically. Hard Road is what you might call the complete Blues, Soul, Funk, and Gospel album. A fitting tribute to a man of such tender years.

STEPHEN HARRISON

EXPLORE



THE FAMILY JUKEBOX

SELF TITLED

Independent

Well, what have we here? From Sweden, the land that gave us Abba and Spotify, we have an indie release that features music that seems near-impossible to classify. At times Rock, at times post-punkish in nature, The Family Jukebox is both the band name and the eponymous release title. This five-piece outfit come with a warning – play it loud. Make no mistake, this is one of those albums that simply cannot murmur quietly in the background and will never turn-up as Muzak in an elevator. Twin guitarists, John Eimre who doubles on vocals, and slide from Per Olof Sjostrom are ably supported by leading Stockholm blues harp master, Mats Qwarfordt and Mikael Kerslow on drums. An ensemble that provide a strong roots-inspired sound that jumps from the disc with an extraordinary force and purpose. Certainly not one for the faint-hearted, this debut offering from Family Jukebox will appeal to those that like their music unusual, explorative and unexpectedly powerhouse.

IAIN PATIENCE

AFTON WOLFE

OPHIUCHUS

Grandiflora Records

Ophiuchus is a large "Serpent bearer" in Greek, that represents a man holding a snake. It's also a real constellation located near the celestial equator... Wanting to cast a complex magic spell Wolfe entered a year long process using December 2024 to release Ivocation, track 13 on the album, as the Sun travelled into the constellation Sagittarius. Since then, tracks have been released in conjunction with the Sun's true zodiacal path through the heavens -- seems like you should know that bit as it's how Mr Wolfe wanted it. November 30th the sun will enter the constellation Ophiuchus, and the spell will be complete! Right, to the album itself. Bang! Ophiuchus is heavy rock track with a blues story to tell; loud and



© Li Roda-Gi

LAURA COX

TROUBLE COMING

earMUSIC/VeryRecords

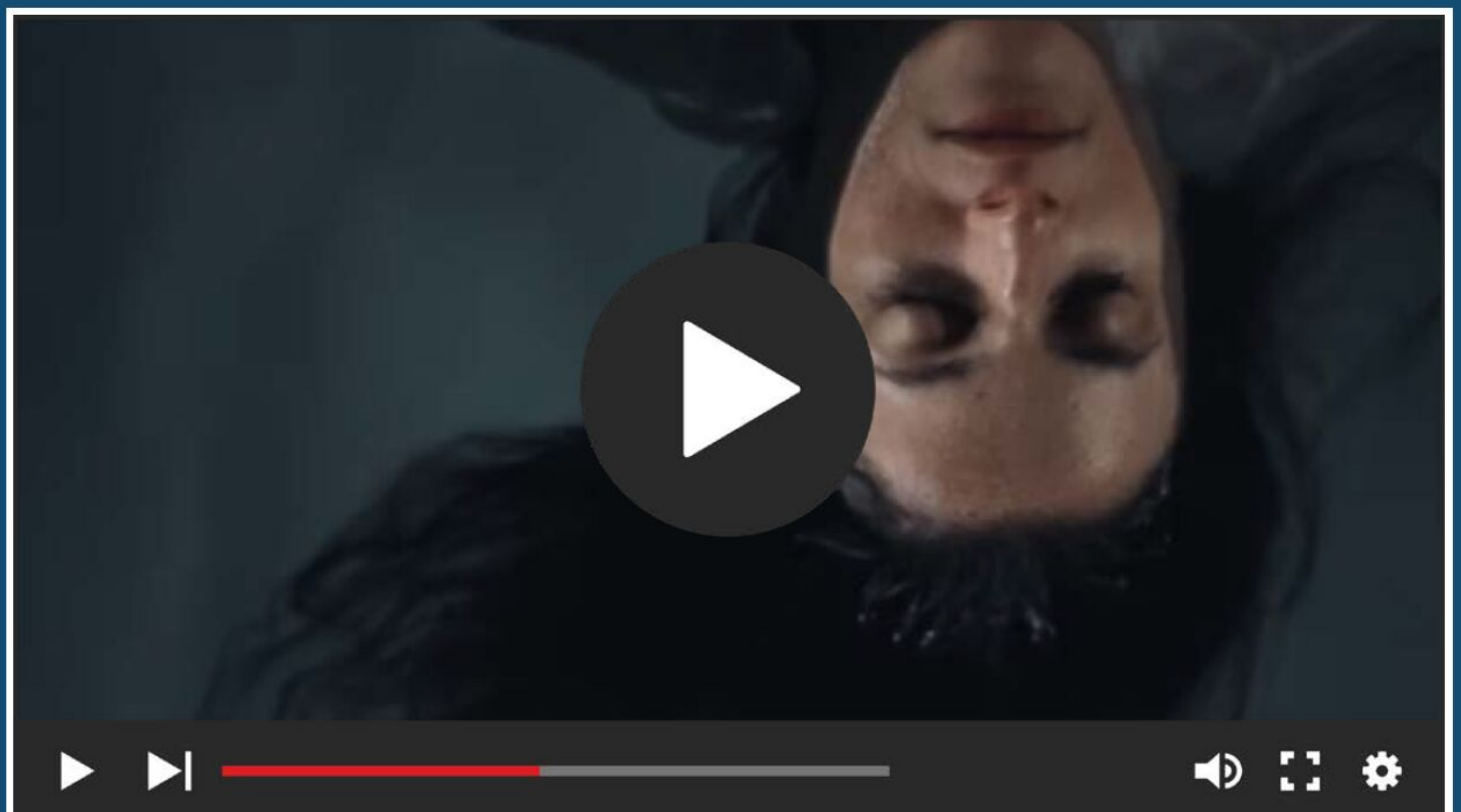


If you want to capture your audience's ears right out of the traps, it makes sense not to hang around. A lesson Laura Cox has obviously learned in the journey to releasing her third studio album. Everything kicks in, front and centre, from the first sound out of the speakers. Although there is production here, layered vocals and multi-tracking crunching riffy guitars, the songs still retain a pleasingly rough 'live' feel about them. The essence has not been mixed out, it's still running through everything, and that's a valuable asset for an album to have. On 'A Way Home' Laura's vocal has a wonderfully sassy and confident style of singing, a 'Don't mess with me ...' vibe that ratchets up as the album develops. The album has a cavernous boomy production that's going to sound really cool through ear buds, radio speakers, and stadium PA systems alike. It's the variety of sounds that make this album inter-

“A class album from an artist going places. Quickly!”

esting. The wonderfully grungy bass matched against the singing guitar lead on 'Dancing Round The Truth', giving it a retro-eighties American power-pop vibe that sets the artist well apart from being 'just another girl who happens to play guitar like a boy', Laura Cox is very well above all that stereotyping. When 'Out Of The Blue' comes up, the lead banjo break that starts it feels entirely in place, no novelty factor, it's just the right instrument for the feel of the song. Saving the best to last is always a good idea – 'Strangers Someday' is the sort of atmospheric song you find as the credits roll on a thoughtful and satisfying American TV drama series – if you find those songs, check this out, and let me know. A class album from an artist going places. Quickly!

ANDY HUGHES



WATCH
ON YOUTUBE



LISTEN
ON SPOTIFY

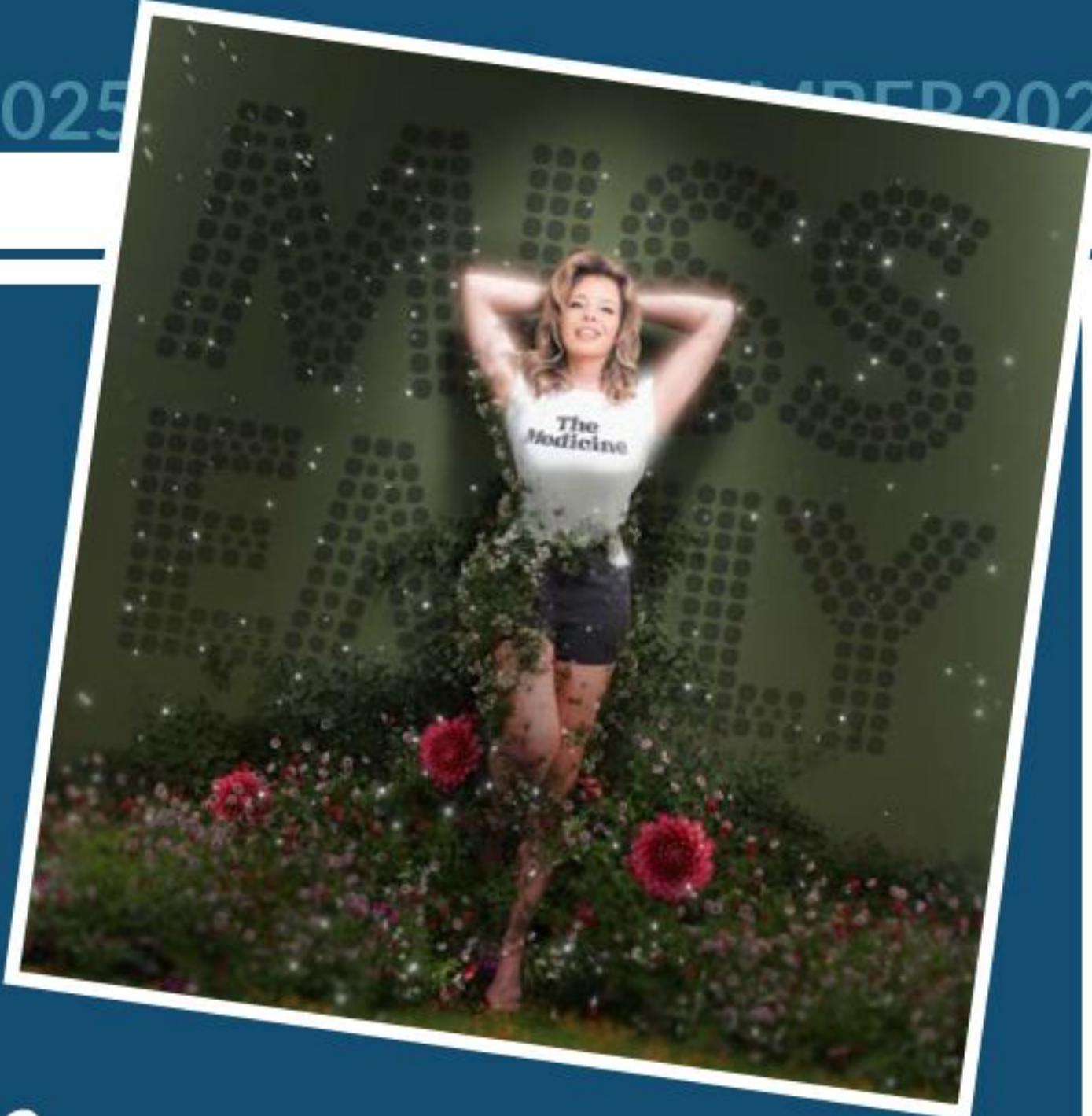


VISIT
THEIR WEBSITE

MISS EMILY

THE MEDICINE

Gypsy Soul Records



Miss Emily’s new release arrives as more than a blues-rooted record, it’s a bold act of soul care, a testament to how music can cradle both the storm and the sunrise. Produced with a master’s touch by Grammy-winner Colin Linden, the album places Emily’s voice exactly where it belongs: front and centre, free to soar, crack, and resonate with raw honesty. From the first breath of My Freedom, renewal is the message. A heartbeat pulse of rhythm, guitars curling like smoke around her delivery, and a vocal tone that feels like a survivor stepping into the light, it’s an opening that declares both resilience and rebirth. Stand Together, Band Together, is a rallying cry, wide open in spirit, inclusive by design, and carrying the weight of an anthem meant to unite. Across its nine tracks, The Medicine balances confession and celebration. Songs like Smith’s Bay Drowning and the title track reach into grief and person-

“a highly recommended release

al darkness, yet they never stay there long. Even the heaviest shadows are lifted by Emily’s refusal to linger, each chorus offers light. The band follows suit; Linden’s guitar lines shimmer, Michael Hicks’s Hammond organ swells with gospel warmth, and a rhythm section that brings depth and groove without ever overshadowing the voice at the heart. This album embraces grace. The slower passages give space, like a held breath before the next release. When Emily leans into those moments, she transforms reflection into strength, showing that blues doesn’t always need to burn hot to leave a mark. Miss Emily turns her scars into songs, her voice into testimony, and her conviction into balm, a highly recommended release.

COLIN CAMPBELL



proud you are introduced to the incredible growl of Wolfe’s voice. Track 3, Rules of War, my favourite of the album. A beautiful lyrical story to an amazing back drop of musical sounds. Wolfe’s voice, man, if the beautiful and forever cool Sam Elliott had a singing voice this would be it. Running across every influence, Southern Soul, Blues, Country noir, Indie Gospel with amazing story telling and piano, trombone, saxophone and clarinet all playing their



© Céline Klein

JEAN KNAPPITT

Independent



At the album's core is Cold City, a track that burns with both vulnerability and defiance. Herbert's piano is a force of nature, rolling, raging, unrelenting, while his voice delivers the ache of chasing big dreams in unforgiving places. It's as timeless as it is contemporary, the kind of song that captures the blues' eternal tension between struggle and hope. Herbert also cuts loose on storming numbers like I Got the Fury, Texas Boogie, and Bad, where his showmanship shines and the band behind him kicks with no wasted motion. Then there's Guilty Pleasures, a sly, groove-soaked detour that shows his versatility. His choice of covers; Hendrix's Fire and Snooks Eaglin's If I Could is telling reverential but fearless, Herbert reshapes them

into his own fiery language. This record carries the weight of Herbert's own journey; immigration, pandemic losses, and the grind of jobs left behind, infusing it with emotional muscle. Still this release overall is a triumph. Herbert proves that piano-driven rock 'n' roll isn't just relevant, it's vital.

COLIN CAMPBELL

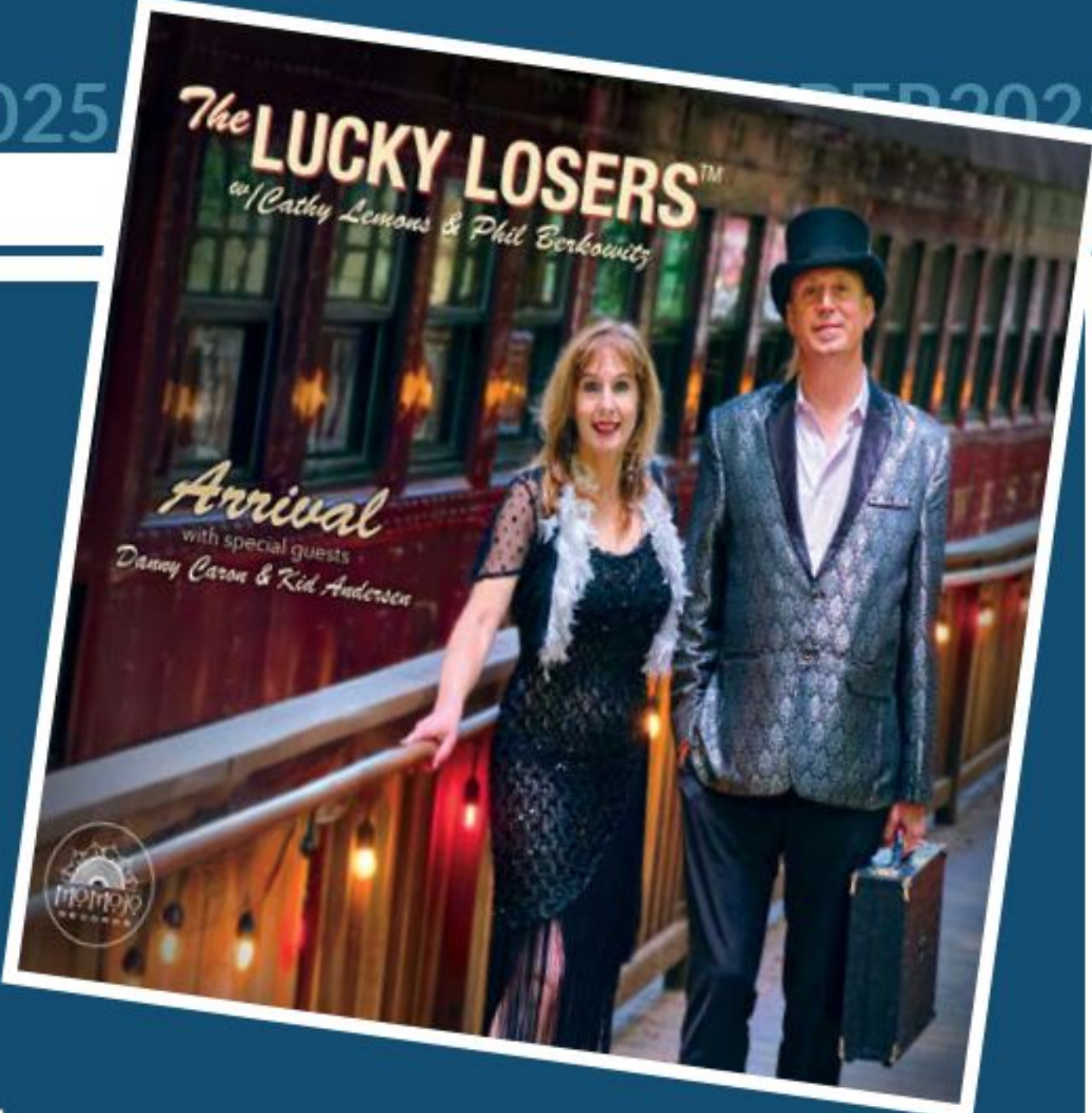


 Sean-Murphy-Austin

THE LUCKY LOSERS

ARRIVAL

MoMojo Records

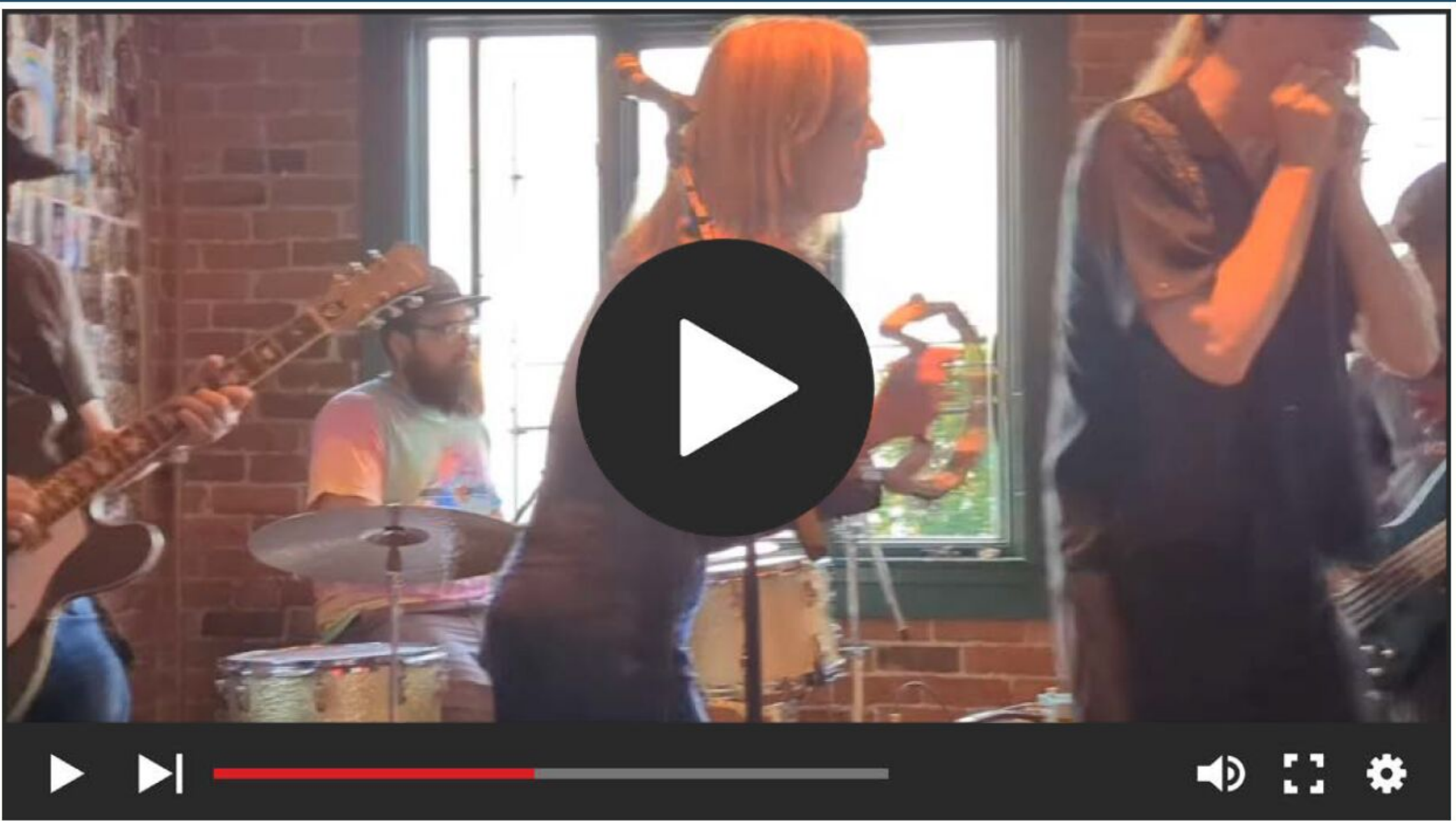


With *Arrival*, The Lucky Losers plant their flag firmly in the ground as one of the most vital voices in contemporary blues. Cathy Lemons and Phil Berkowitz aren't just keeping the fire alive, they are reshaping it, fusing retro soul, gospel fervour, Americana grit, and deep blues feeling into a record that's both steeped in tradition and undeniably of the moment. Cut at Kid Andersen's Greaseland Studios, this release bears all the marks of a band in full stride. The production is rich, the performances are fearless, and the songwriting sharpens their distinct point of view. From the very first blast of S-C-A-M, a funky, sly groove that doubles as social commentary, Lemons and Berkowitz announce they won't be boxed in by categories.

“they have hit a creative high

The journey unfolds with the swaggering soul-rock of *Sunday Stroller*, the hand-clapping gospel driven *Pull on the Rope*, and the bare-boned, soul-baring testimony of *I Believe Her*, a track that lands with both lyrical heft and vocal fire. By the time the curtain falls on the gentle country-blues closer, *Ain't the Marrying Kind*, the record feels like a lived-in story, not just a collection of songs. The Lucky Losers channel their influences without ever losing their own identity. Gospel harmonies, fat horn charts, greasy grooves, and jagged guitar licks all find their place, but the thread that ties it together is the unmistakable chemistry between Lemons and Berkowitz. These songs are proof they have hit a creative high, and they're daring the rest of the blues world to keep up.

COLIN CAMPBELL



BEN HEMMING

THE MEANING OF ALL THINGS

Independent

With a twanging telecaster, a strong band, and some care-worn vocals and tales of late-night regrets, Ben Hemming delivers a lot of music and story on *The Meaning of All Things*. Written completely by the singer songwriter and guitarist, and accompanied by drummer Mike Sturgis, and bass player Stefan Redtenbacher, this is an album that takes the listener on a intense journey. With rock rhythms, and slide guitar to the fore, the music recalls Led Zeppelin in their rockier moments and has something of the downhearted blues and folk in its relatively quieter moments. There is something of late-night jazz in the soundscapes, and something of regret, and seeking redemption throughout the entirety of this release. *Devil May Care* is a swaggering bluesy riff rocker with some incendiary slide guitar, while *Praise Me* is a gospel song with an uplift in the chorus. *Old Bones* is a cinematic tale and the album's closing track *London Fog* is rich in atmosphere. Although this is a blues album, there is much to distance it from the competition. The lyrics all tell stories, and the music side-steps many of the twelve-bar pentatonic cliches that can spoil the mood of the pieces. All the album is taut, and finely tuned, and although there are some moments of musical catharsis, the rhythm section keeps things ticking along nicely, giving Ben Hemming's well defined and increasingly developed talent a proper chance to shine.

BEN MACNAIR

BRAVE RIVAL

5 TO 4

Independent

The first release from Brave Rival since Chloe Josephine's departure reflects their reconfiguration from quintet to



A full-body portrait of a man with dark hair and a light beard, looking off to the side. He is wearing a brown suede blazer over a blue denim shirt, which is unbuttoned at the collar. He is also wearing blue jeans and a large, round, gold belt buckle. He has tattoos on his arms, including a '19' on his right forearm. He is holding a black suitcase in his right hand. The background is white with a blue vertical bar on the right. The name 'Eric Martin' is visible in the bottom right corner.

 Eric Martin

MANU LANVIN

MAN ON A MISSION

Gel Productions

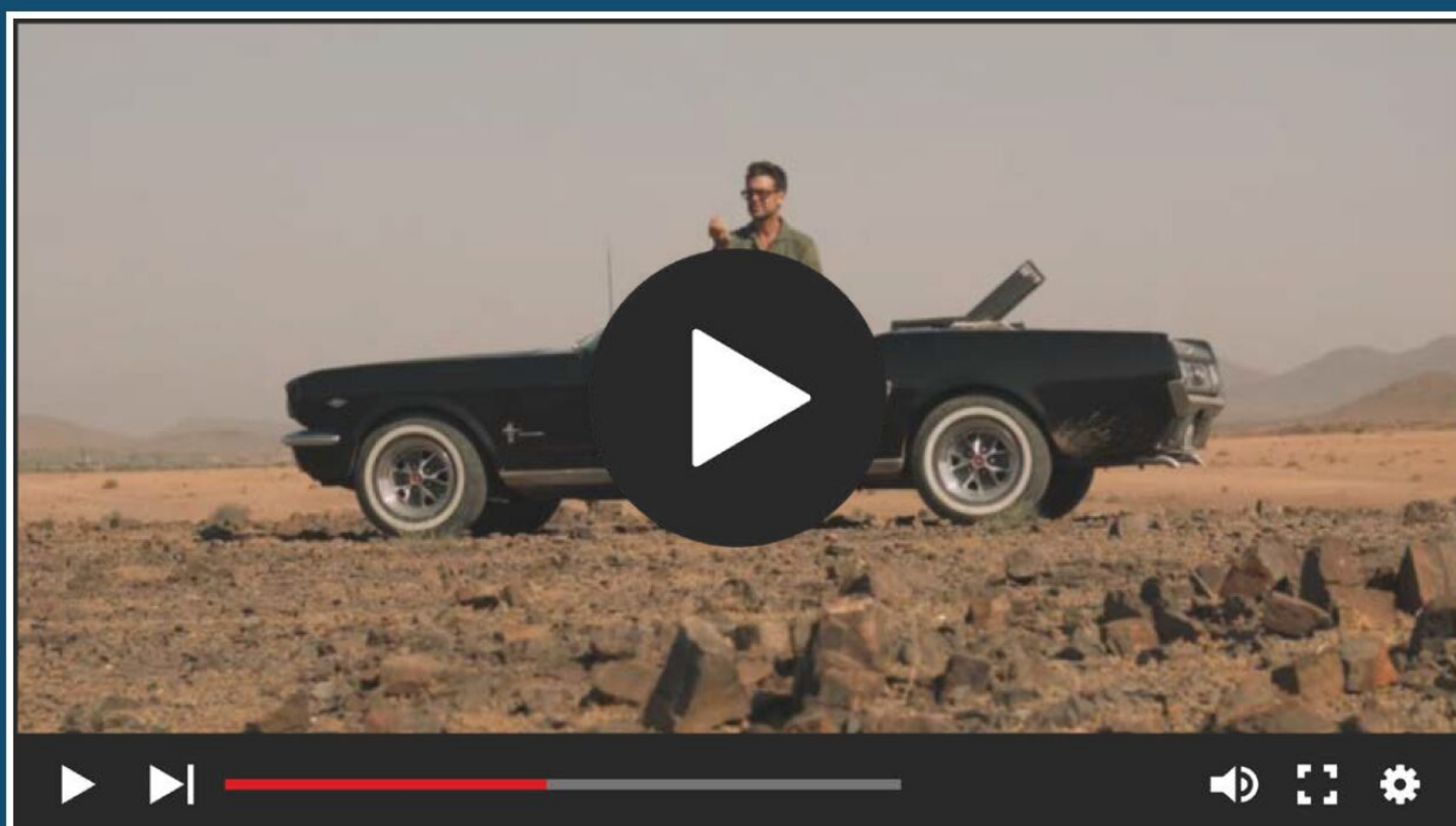


Manu Lanvin has been at the top of the France blues scene for many years now and he now hopes to replicate that success in the UK and USA. He has proven in the past that he can rock out with the best, but this album is a more well-balanced song led release. Well respected France-based Texan Neal Black contributes to writing nine of the thirteen tracks. Bennett Holland who is well known to UK Blues fans plays keys throughout. Just Need Me opens the album with a very Tom Waits like intro, Manu's sandpaper vocals fitting in perfectly. I Can't Get Enough Of You is a well-constructed retrospective love song that shows a less gravelled side of Manu vocally. He is a mean guitarist too as showcased on Did You See Judy, without ever swamping the song. His vocal adaptability shines on the ballad Change My Ways making the song real and believable. I Got The Blues swerves into a totally different direction again, full of swing and swagger. Savigny Sur-Orge is probably the most personal track on the album, Manu singing to and about childhood memories with his mother. It's poignant and heartfelt. It's not all about

66 *This is an album guaranteed to win Manu new friends*

love and lose though, Manu can throw in a couple of politically motivated tirades too. What's The Matter With You and Could It Be Love hit the spot with clever observational lyrics. Saving Angel is almost Stones-ish, listing all of his bad attributes in a rock'n'roll swaggering style. We close with Une Nuit, a very Gaelic sounding French language song creating images of Parisian strolls along the Seine and candle-lit wine bars. This is an album guaranteed to win Manu new friends; it's well balanced with emotional songs that paint pictures and tell stories, and it rewards extended listens.

STEVE YOURGLIVCH



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VISIT
THEIR WEBSITE

in lyrical concept to Alice Cooper's 1989 hit of the same name the song deals with a relationship that is both thrilling and toxic, however Alice's hit is a mere candy cane in comparison to this monstrous dose of adrenaline-soaked venom. The blues isn't forgotten entirely on this release. Try Again has shades of Zeppelin with an acoustic intro and the mystical echoes of Ed Clarke's guitar. Bonnick's hushed tones putting us at ease before Redman's bass arrives and wraps the blues once again in a hard rock shell. There's even a touch of Floyd style vocal improvisation from Bonnick in this enthralling seven-minute epic. Control verges on classic 80s NWOBHM as Clarke is let off the leash with unrestrained guitar histrionics whilst Peters batters us into joyful submission. Bonnick once again putting down a partner with vitriolic intent. Heavy rock n roller Wild Child is reminiscent of Joan Jett, albeit on amphetamines. The EP concludes

with acoustic versions of Poison, Control and Wild Child, a reminder of Brave Rival's versatility and their blues roots. A tasty fulfilling starter that leaves the listener salivating in anticipation of the soon to follow main course.

TAF ROCK

DAVE ARCARI

STILL FRIENDS

Buzz Records

Scottish troubadour Dave Arcari returns with Still Friends, an album that feels like a fireside conversation between old souls, stripped down, heartfelt, and steeped in the grit of experience. This isn't Arcari chasing volume or flash; it's him turning the spotlight inward, letting the stories and scars in his songs do the heavy lifting. The opener, Hellhound Train, roars out of the gate, a locomotive

of rhythm and raw intent, proof that Arcari's slide guitar still hits like steel on steel. Then comes Come With Me, a tender love song where restraint becomes power. Every note of his slide work shimmers with honesty. On the title track, the banjo brings a rustic, front-porch authenticity as Arcari reflects on friendship and childhood memories, it's as pure and personal as he's ever sounded. Another bluesy highlight is Walk The Walk he snarls out the truthful lyrics. Vocally, Arcari has never been stronger. There's a grit and grain to his delivery, particularly on Whisky In My Blood, that captures everything that his fans love about him the whisky-soaked truth-telling, the road-worn honesty. This release thrives on its simplicity. Arcari pares the music back to its bones Each song feels lived in, like pages torn from a travel-worn diary. The themes are classic Arcari: distance, reconciliation, the push and pull between connection and

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We sit down with one of the most legendary figures in blues and world music-Taj Mahal. At 82 years young, this pioneering artist continues to defy expectations...

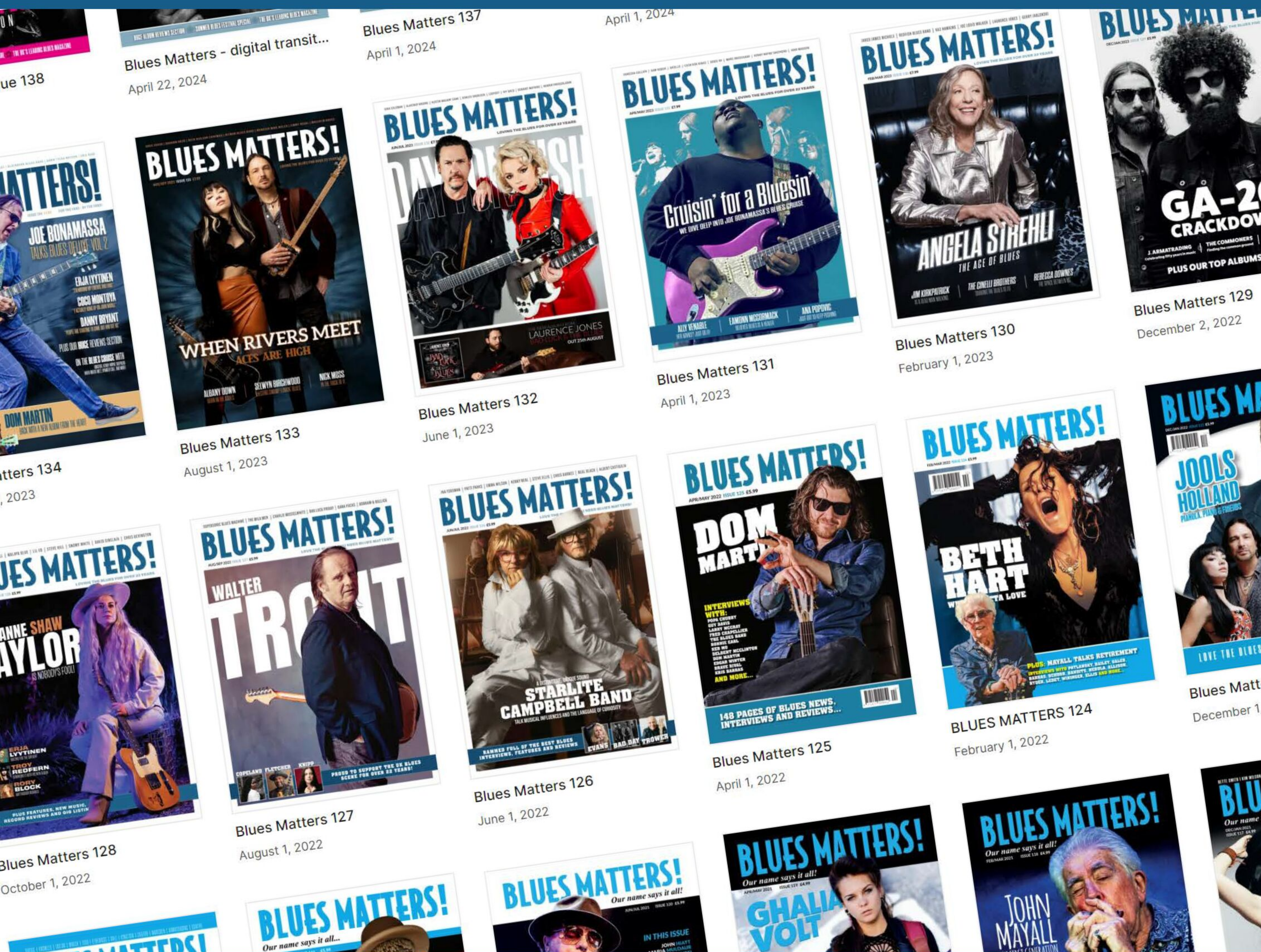


MITCH WOODS

Mitch recalls how hearing boogie piano as a child set him on his path, shares the story of recording with the legendary Fats Domino band for Big Easy Boogie.

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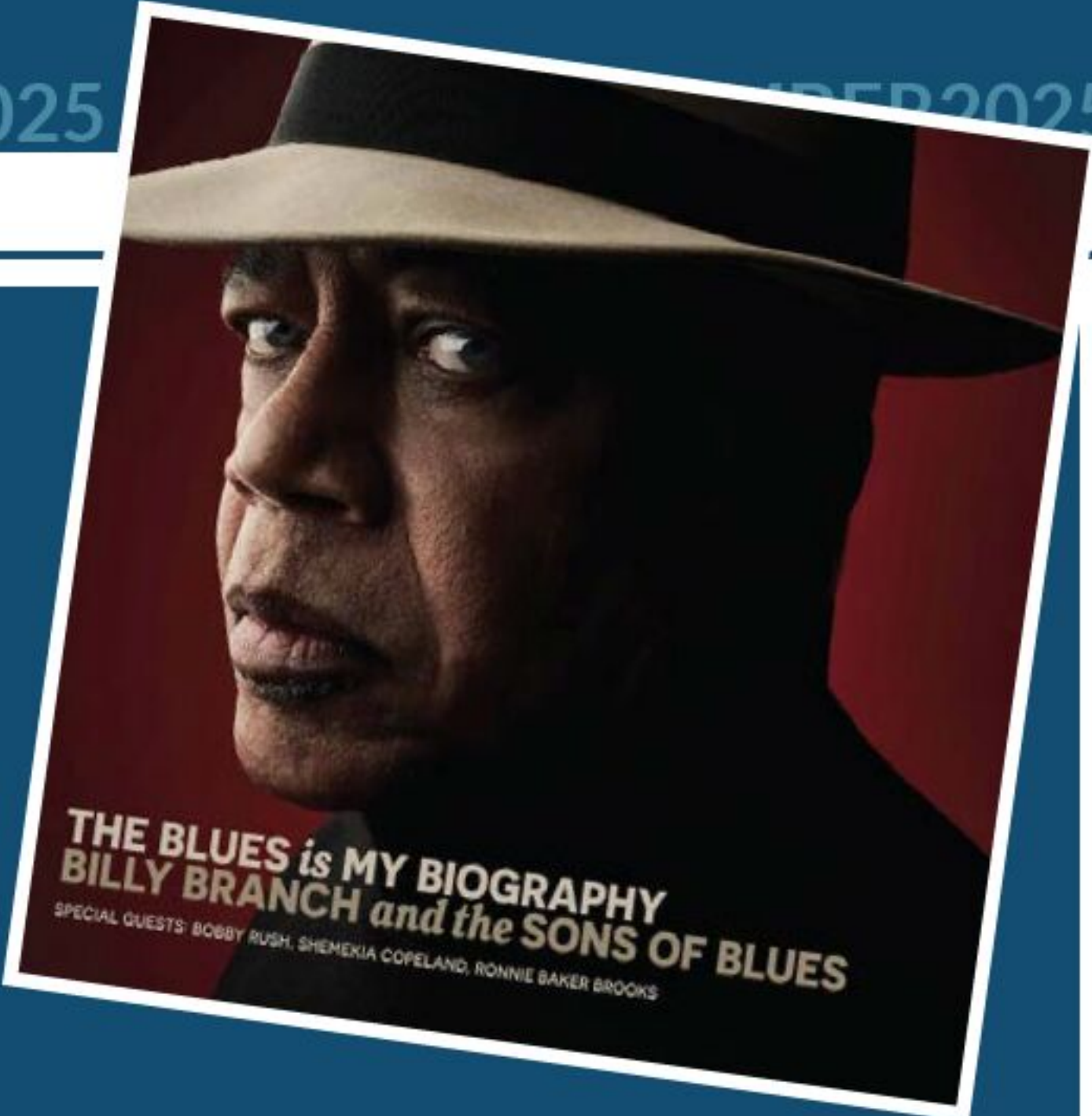


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BILLY BRANCH

THE BLUES IS MY BIOGRAPHY

Rosas Lounge Records



Billy Branch's new album release is a bold, deeply personal statement from one of Chicago blues' most enduring voices. From the first notes, it's clear that this is more than just another blues record, it is in fact a musical memoir. The album, produced by Larry Batiste, is full of original compositions that trace Branch's life, influences, and devotion to the harmonica. The record moves fluidly through musical styles be that from raw Chicago shuffles to funk-infused grooves, Latin tints, even reggae undertones. The tunes are all grounded firmly in Branch's harrowing harmonica and seasoned voice. Tracks like Hole in Your Soul, with Bobby Rush's guest harmonica and vocals, and Begging for Change featuring Shemekia Copeland, offer high points of collaboration and emotional weight. Harmonica Man

Overall, this is one of Branch's most complete and honest works

stands out as a kind of self-portrait, where the artist is reflecting on his own trajectory through music. Branch's backing band, The Sons of Blues, is rock-solid with the interplay between guitar, keys, bass and drums never overpowers but enhances the storytelling. Lyrically and musically, the album balances reflection and vitality: it acknowledges struggle and pain, but also joy, pride and legacy. The Blues Is My Biography rewards repeated listens. It's a powerful, dignified, heartfelt testament to a lifetime with the blues. Overall, this is one of Branch's most complete and honest works; it cements his role not just as a torchbearer but as a storyteller whose life is inseparable from the music.

COLIN CAMPBELL





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solitude. Yet there's a newfound patience here, a maturity that lets the silences speak as loudly as the strings. It's not a reinvention, but a refinement, the sound of a bluesman embracing stillness without losing his edge. Still Friends is a quietly powerful record that lingers long after the final note the kind that seeps into your bones, one listen at a time.

COLIN CAMPBELL

ERIN HARPE & JIM COUNTRYMAN

LET THE MERMAIDS FLIRT WITH ME

Vizztone Records

Given the album title, there's little surprise to find it's subtitled as a tribute to Mississippi John Hurt, one of the absolute giants of the acoustic country-blues world. In truth, I'm a huge fan of this lady- and her partner – having been following her music for many years. Harpe has a history of picking and immersion in old-school acoustic blues that stretches back for most of her life. As a recording artist, she has picked a path that can at times appear packed with contenders while always offering her own take on it all. With Mermaids, she has again delivered a truly wonderful release covering most of the renowned, late Hurt's greatest numbers. Tracks include Candyman, the opener, Mermaids Flirt with Me, Richland Woman Blues, Casey Jones – a lesser-known track – and Frankie. Overall, the selected material is perfect and matched beautifully by Harpe's distinctive, clear and clean picking and vocals supported by Countryman's cool bass work. Currently touring the UK, this duo is a must-see act whenever possible and this album is an excellent addition to the traditional acoustic blues canon.

IAIN PATIENCE

GWYN ASHTON

GREASE BUCKET

Fab Tone records

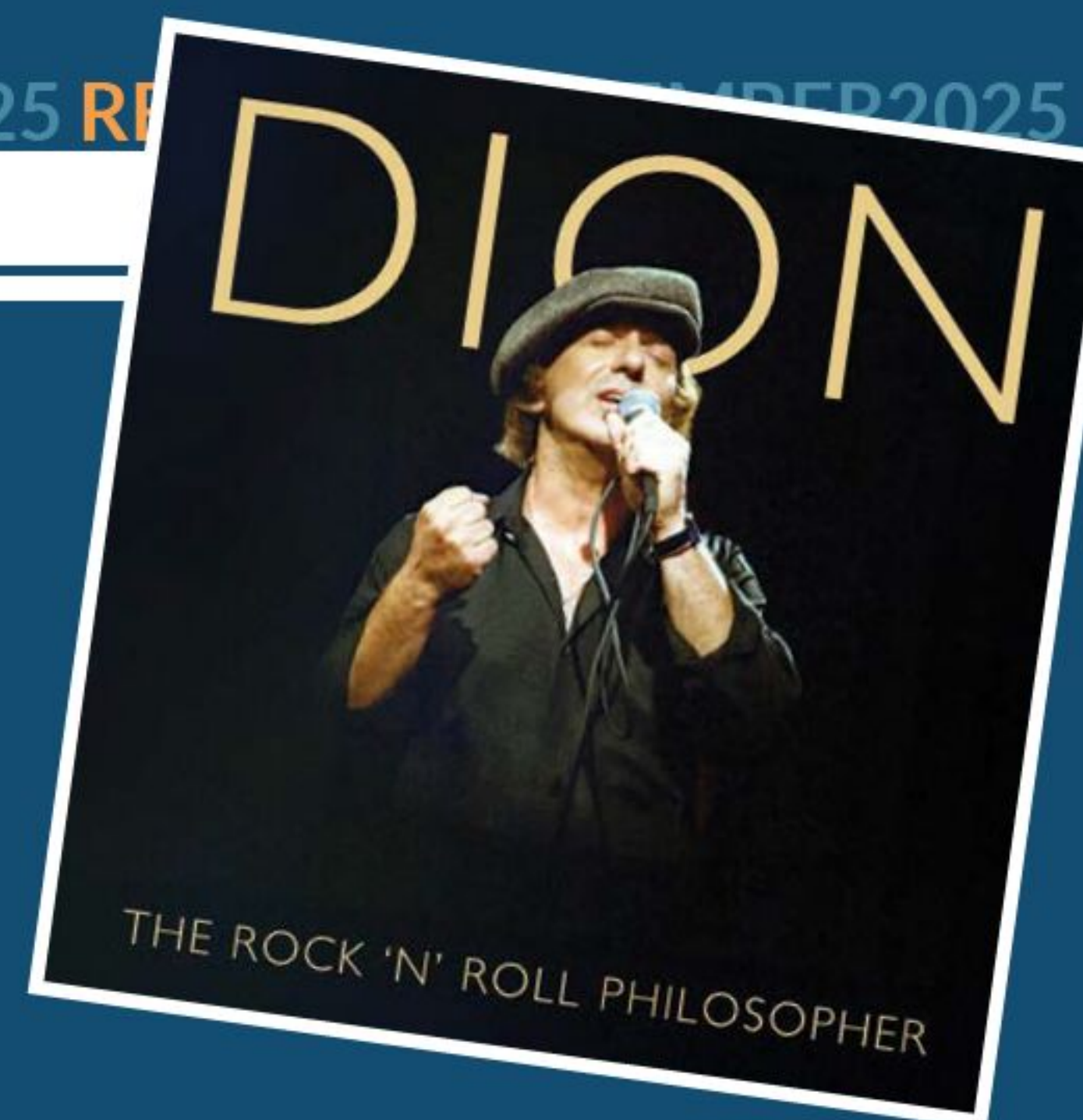
Gwyn Ashton's Grease Bucket is a gritty, swaggering return to the no-frills heart of blues-rock—an album that wears its filth with pride and channels raw energy from first to last. Over ten tracks, Ashton fuses



DION

THE ROCK'N'ROLL PHILOSOPHER

KTBA Records



This latest Dion release accompanies his book of the same name, co-written with recovery coach Adam Jablin. It traces the highs and lows of a career spanning six decades and showcases Dion's enduring creativity. The album draws from his trio of KTBA releases alongside new versions of classics and live cuts with The Little Kings, the hard-rocking band formed by Scott Kempner of The Dictators and Del-Lords. I'm Your Gangster Of Love opens with Dion's trademark rhythmic vocals, followed by New York Minute, a timeless evocation of city life. Ruby Baby, first recorded in 1963, still shines with vibrant sax and swagger. Joe Bonamassa features on Take It Back from Stomping Ground, a fiery blues rocker showing both artists in top form, while a new take on New York Is My Home celebrates Dion's

“ still full of fire, soul, and wisdom

lifelong love affair with his city. Sonny Landreth adds slide brilliance to Cryin' Shame, echoing Dion's battles with addiction, and Mark Knopfler lends his touch to the smoky Dancing Girl. In A Heartbeat Of Time revisits a Little Kings favourite and shows Dion's vocals remain rich and soulful. Serenade/Come To The Cross, inspired by Tom Waits, reveals his spiritual side, while If You Wanna Rock N Roll with Eric Clapton reaffirms his credentials. The journey continues with Ride With You and an intimate Abraham, Martin And John, one of his most personal songs. King Of The New York Streets captures Dion at his grittiest before the timeless one-two of Runaround Sue and The Wanderer. The album closes tenderly with Mother And Son, delivered with heartfelt authenticity. New York may be the city that never sleeps, and neither, it seems, does Dion—still full of fire, soul, and wisdom.

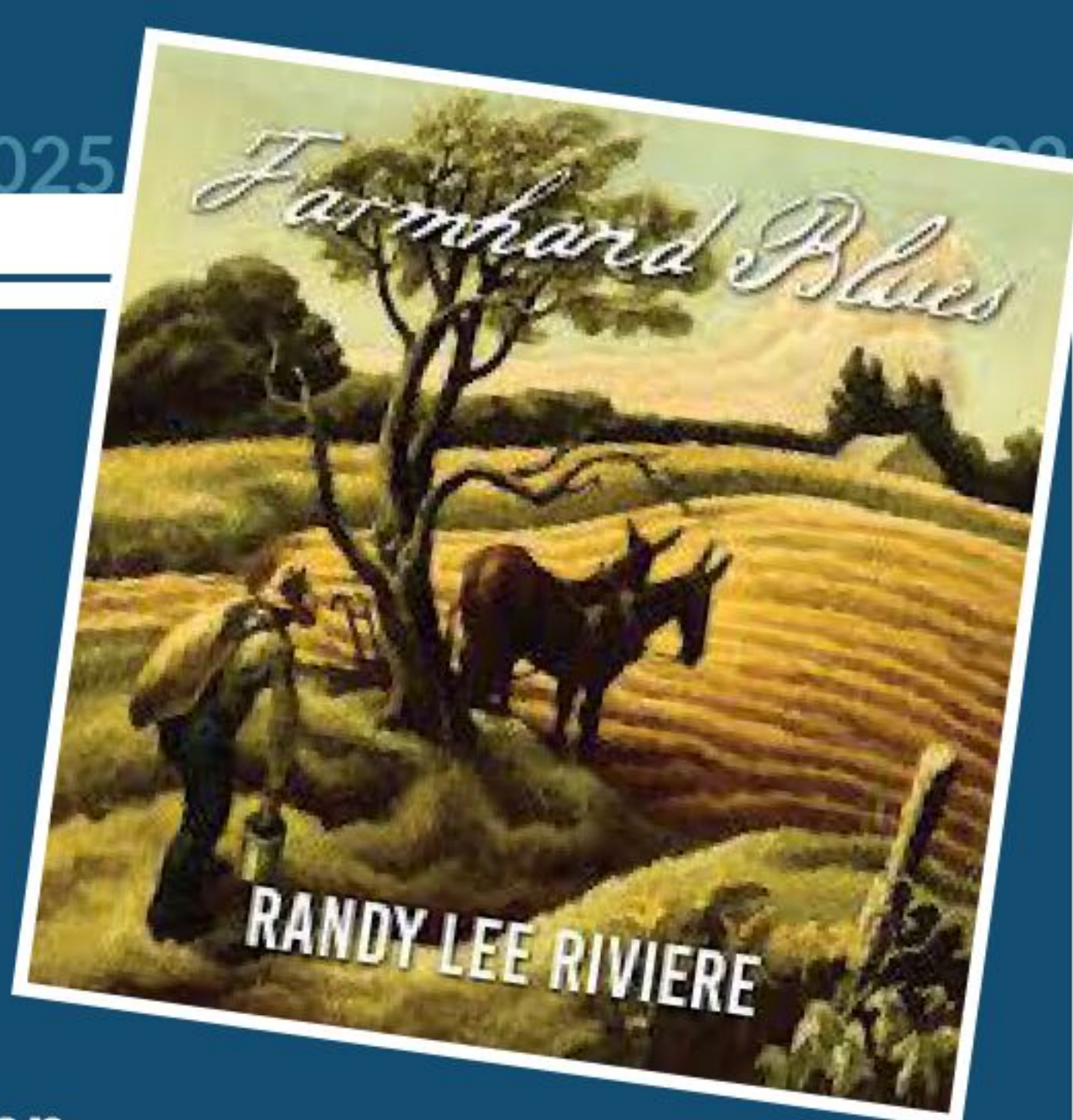
STEVE YOURGLIVCH



RANDY LEE RIVIRRE

FARMHAND BLUES

Wilderness



It's a funny old world! My last review was for an album by Tom Hambridge and now here he is again but this time as producer on this new release by Montana based Randy Lee Rivire. To describe his music and sound as residing at the dirty grungy end of Blues would be about right. I found it very refreshing and interesting. Sure there are also shades of say Tony Joe White in there sitting alongside Pearl Jam, Soundgarden and even, at a push, Nirvana but here Randy most certainly is ploughing, or should that be plowing (?) his own furrow. This album drips with American references, obviously, but don't let this put you off. So off we go with Downtown relating the tale of a mountain man coming into town to try and play his songs (a self reference perhaps?). Whatever the case it rocks along very nicely. Big On A Bender should be self evident as to the content with lyrics like "Ever get your head kicked? Ever felt that

Very good album indeed

night-stick? So it goes on through the title track and Bird Watching. Can't make up my mind if he is truly singing about ornithology or not but who cares? Throughout Randy is supported by a studio band, assembled by Tom, and they collectively most certainly deliver a cracking big sound. A lot of thought and effort has gone into the creative process but I am also left with the thought that the songs would also stand up well with just a single angry guitar under the voice. With albums like this I find it hard to select a standout cuts but December 1980, On My Way Down and Moonlight work for me. Very good album indeed.

GRAEME SCOTT

blues, slide guitar and a rock-attitude soaked in grime and swagger, striking a balance between tradition and wild abandon. One of the standout tracks is, When the Well Runs Dry. This opens with a snarling slide guitar that feels like it's clawing its way out of the speakers, while Ashton's vocal delivery pivots between spoken grit and soulful howl. It's a track that sets the tone be that confrontational, moody, or unpredictable in style. Elsewhere, Somebody leans into a fat, driving groove, Self-Isolation Blues embraces a darker shuffle, and Down and Dirty bristles with sexual tension and corrosive and memorable guitar riffs. The final tune, Blues for the Tortured Soul, acts like a spiritual exorcism. It is stark, introspective, yet still underpinned by a muscular sense of swing. Gwyn Ashton's lo-fi edges occasionally threaten to tip into rawness that slightly obscures subtler musical ideas. But that's part of the charm; this is no polished juke-joint serenade; it's a rough-hewn, full-tilt slab of blues attitude. When everything lines up, this release feels like the record Ashton needed to make, reminding us that sometimes blues still sounds best when it's scuffed, snarling, and unapologetically alive. In short, this is a triumph in grease, grit and soul and highly recommended.

COLIN CAMPBELL



LONG TALL DEB & COLIN JOHN

LIGHT IT UP

VizzTone

This is the third album from this talented



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ON SPOTIFY



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THEIR WEBSITE

and distinctive blues-based duo of Texas singer Deb Landolt aka Long Tall Deb and the British- American guitarist Colin John explores tough blues-rock and even a shuffle borrowed from The Eurythmics. Well, OK, maybe the straight blues shuffle accompaniment itself isn't, but the song, Sweet Dreams, certainly is – and it works so well. That is bound to attract attention, but in case you wonder about the band's strictly blues credentials, lend an ear to



LEILANI KILGORE

TELL YOUR GHOST

Independent

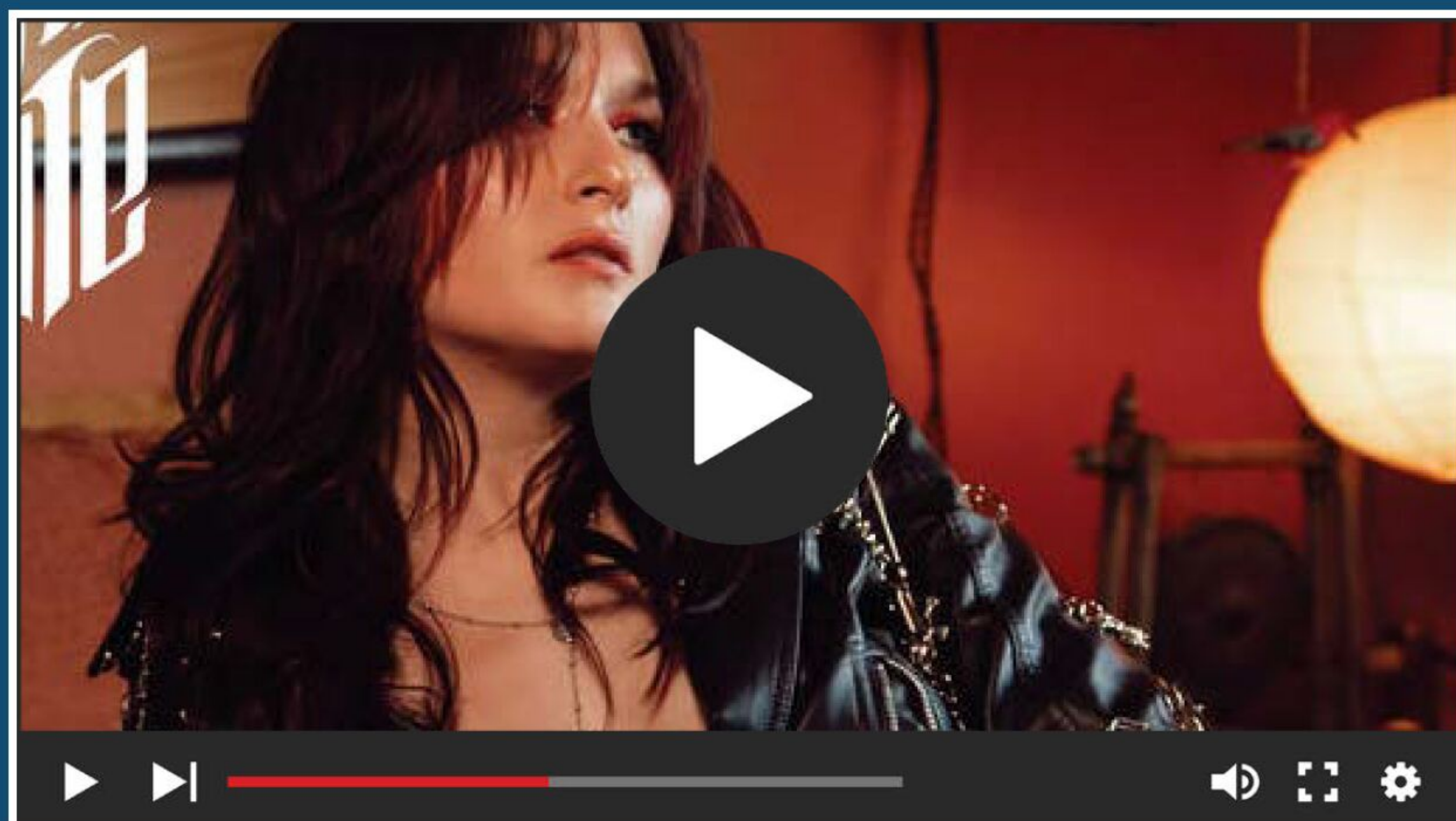


Out of Nashville's thriving scene, blues-rock guitarist Leilani Kilgore is stepping into the spotlight with her debut album. Kilgore delivers a record that was years in the making but re-recorded in just three whirlwind studio days. Self-produced, the album is a statement of intent: fiery, fearless, and impossible to pigeonhole. While rooted in the blues, Kilgore stretches the genre's boundaries with doses of rock, blues, and raw grit, cementing her reputation as a bold new voice. The opening track, High/Low, sets the tone with a stomping groove and a vocal delivery that's at once sultry and commanding, her voice hitting that lower register where it shines. Early Grave strips things back, channeling the band's chemistry into an aching ballad that highlights both her vocal range and her songwriting growth. On the other end of the spectrum,

“Blues may be Kilgore's foundation, but this album proves she's building something much bigger”

Wish You Were Dead has Kilgore's musical trademark all over it; crunchy riffs, defiant attitude, and the kind of raw energy that has defined her live shows. Two tracks hit especially hard: Burn and Spanish Moss. The former roars out of the gate with distortion thick enough to leave a mark, capped off by a primal scream that's as startling as it is exhilarating. The latter takes a more traditional blues route, steeped in Southern imagery, dead magnolias, cicadas, humid nights that paint a vivid portrait of Mississippi. Adding the haunting ethereal tones of I See Stars and Tell Your Ghost these feel both personal and expansive tracks. Blues may be Kilgore's foundation, but this album proves she's building something much bigger. At 26, she isn't just chasing ghosts, she's conjuring her own.

COLIN CAMPBELL



Hear Them Moan which rides an almost Charley Patton styled backing before the electric guitar break. Then there is a storming version of Willie Dixon's Spoonful, drawing heavily on Howling Wolf's rendition; Wolf is a particular hero of both Colin and Deb – it sounds like it too, without being overly reverential, and Steve Marriner's blues harp also adds some deep blues feel. Deb howls very convincingly on Black Light Wolf too, with some psychedelic elements to be heard in the guitar work on this one. Helping out on both drums and bass throughout the album is co-producer Chris Butler, who also co-wrote many of the songs, and Terry Abrahamson, who wrote songs for Muddy Waters way back, helped in the composition of Lessons In The Ground. The other originals are also well worth hearing – try Deflection Blues, an intelligent song that tells it straight and certainly won't be finding approval from a certain Mr Trump any time soon. Musically there is some astonishing lap steel guitar work from Colin too; his playing is as good on the soulful, closing, ballad Crooks Thieves And Liars too, which has a similar message. Out For A Rip is an instrumental showcase, with guest contributions by guitarists Pascal Fouquet and Alastair Greene. It just helps to show the classy company Deb and Colin tend to keep.

NORMAN DARWEN

MAC LLOYD HOLD FAST

Soul Jam Audio Recordings

Elements of soul, hip hop, rap, reggae, electronica and a hefty pinch of blues, fuse together to create a delectable dish which Mac Lloyd refers to as melancholic soul. Debut album Hold Fast is hearty and satisfying, flavoured by lessons learnt during the last decade, fatherhood, grief, love and addiction amongst the subjects dealt with. Our senses are awakened as a whistling refrain permeates the big dark cloud hanging Over The Mill. Slide guitar and harmonica provide the blues amongst the veritable cornucopia of genres represented in this addictive tale of

corruption and wrongdoing. Falling Apart deals with depression and mental health. Keys create an air of desperation as the timebomb counts down to imminent explosion. The enchanting refrain of Herb Garden Part 1 entices us to follow Mac on a bittersweet journey of discovery. Superb bass overtones accompany Mac's distinctive soulful vocal. At the heart of this tune lies a beautiful uplifting guitar solo which carries us into part two, where we awaken to upbeat bass rhythms, Mac's vocal full of passion. Short stabbing keys welcome us to the raspy rap of Inner Monologue. Ingenious both lyrically and musically Mac extends his genius further with King Of Self Sabotage, four words that require no further explanation. Funky, groovy vibes lead us down dark alleys, intent on our destruction. Addiction and depression amongst the hurdles Mac struggled to overcome. Stinging guitar brings his pain and struggles into sharp focus. Bleed Together is a masterpiece highlighting Mac's versatility. Saxophone, piano and lush heavenly backing vocals fuse together to create an emotional theatre of sound. Blues, soul, indie merging into one incredible soundscape which at times gives vibes of Wille And The Bandits. Hypnotic, mesmerising and stunningly beautiful, a tribute to a soulmate who just like this tune leaves you breathless. A vision appears and guides us, Heading North In The Morning makes you feel as if you're riding horseback alongside Mac into a new life. Eventually arriving Home at the end of a mesmerising journey that enriches your life.

TAF ROCK

MIRADOR MIRADOR

Republic / Island EMI Records

Mirador's self-titled debut arrives with the confidence of a band who know exactly what they want to say. The record blends atmospheric rock with cinematic textures, delivering a sound that is as expansive as it is intimate. From the opening notes, it's clear that Mirador are less concerned with fitting into trends and

more focused on carving out their own sonic identity. The production is lush yet uncluttered, allowing each element space to breathe. Shimmering guitar lines ripple against warm, enveloping bass, while the drums provide both propulsion and restraint. Vocals drift somewhere between ethereal and urgent, pulling the listener into landscapes that feel both dreamlike and grounded in raw emotion. Highlights include the sweeping Fading Lights, which builds from fragile whispers to a towering crescendo, and Echoes of Tomorrow, where layered instrumentation creates a widescreen effect reminiscent of post-rock, though with a more accessible melodic core. The quieter moments, such as on Still Waters, reveal the band's gift for subtlety, proving they don't need grand gestures to leave an impression. What makes Mirador stand out is its balance of atmosphere and songcraft. While the record revels in mood and texture, it never loses sight of melody. Each track feels purposeful, contributing to a cohesive journey that unfolds seamlessly from start to finish. For a debut, Mirador feels remarkably assured. It's an album that rewards both close listening and casual immersion, suggesting that this band has the potential to carve out a lasting place in the modern alternative scene.

COLIN CAMPBELL

ROBERT FINLEY HALLELUJAH- DON'T LET THE DEVIL FOOL YA

Easy Eye Sound

At the tender age of 71, Robert Finley is back with a brand new album, Hallelujah! Don't Let The Devil Fool Ya. This album is a very good indicator of the life that Finley has had. Gospel, Soul, Funk, and of course, Blues are prominent from start to finish. Finley has spent decades honing his craft, often as a semi-professional singer and guitarist. There is an age-old saying: if something is good, then it is worth the wait. A perfect description of this album. Eight tracks, all original, with a host of top-class musicians to

help bring it home. The songs have a deep and meaningful background, lyrically telling stories of faith and love. I Wanna Thank You opens up the proceedings, and immediately, my thoughts are drawn to the amazing vocals that Finley still possesses. He has certainly not lost anything despite his age, in my opinion, he's still up there with the best of Soul and Gospel singers. Apart from an amazing array of musicians, one thing has really struck a chord with me, and I don't say this very often, the backing vocals from Christy Johnson are some of the best that I have ever heard. I would as far as to say, sublime, such a sweet and soulful delivery. For me, the beauty of this collection of material lies in the lyrics, you get a deep and profound insight into the mind and soul of Robert Finley. A story of his life in eight songs, each one opens another window. There is nothing not to like about this, I implore you to get a copy. At 71 years of age, it has certainly been well worth the wait

STEPHEN HARRISON

SHAGGY DOGS PINBALL BLOOMERS

First Offence Records

There's a lived-in grit to Pinball Bloomers that underscores Shaggy Dogs' refusal to settle into genre pigeonholes. From the opening cut Who's Gonna Vote, the band stakes its claim: harmonica snarls, jagged guitars, and vocals channelling both defiance and heartbreak. It's rock-n-roll with bruises, a party with scars. The album leans deep into what the band dubs their "fiesta blues 'n' roll" ethos, equal parts pub-rock muscle, raw blues swagger, and occasional soul inflection. The influence of Dr. Feelgood, Wilko Johnson, early Stones, and that raucous British pub tradition is audible, but never slavishly mimicked. Instead, the Dogs filter it through their own lean, muscular aesthetic. Standouts include City Guy, where the brass and female backing vocals lift the track into barroom frenzy, and Lee's The Man, a bracing tribute to Lee Brilleaux that balances reverence and swagger. The ballad My Baby



REBECCA DOWNES

A STORM IS COMING

MAD HAT RECORDS

A Storm Is Coming is the sixth album from Rebecca Downes, featuring ten original songs written with long-time collaborator Steve Birkett, who also plays most of the instruments, handles arrangements, and oversees production. The sound is often cinematic, opening with a thunderclap and the dramatic title track: "Think I lost my faith, and I don't feel safe, what else will it take to save this now." The epic *These Days* wrestles with the confusion of modern life — "some days I try so hard to understand, some days I don't know who I am."

Rebecca describes *Hold The Reins* as “a metaphorical call to arms... the need to take control in the face of authoritarianism.” Alongside its social reflections, the album explores relationships with honesty and introspection, weaving a narrative thread throughout. There are strong blues

**“a confident, mature collection
that deepens with every listen”**

elements on *Waiting for the Morning*, with fine guitar work from Birkett, while *Bitter Taste* stands out as a raw struggle for self-belief. Though all ten songs are in minor keys, there are brighter moments such as *Falling Into You*, a romantic respite amid the turbulence.

The closing track, *Hit The Ground Running*, featuring her full band, is both questioning and cathartic. Rebecca's layered vocals shine, and Birkett's textured soundscapes perfectly frame her themes. *A Storm Is Coming* is a confident, mature collection that deepens with every listen — arguably Rebecca Downes' finest work to date.

PAUL LONG



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ON YOUTUBE



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Left Me In The Fog offers a welcome moment to breathe emotive, bitter-sweet, with restrained production letting emotion bleed through. But they snap back into full tilt with Talk Too Fast and Go And Run, both relentless in drive and conviction. Your Love Is Dynamite feels a touch more restrained than its title suggests, and a few choruses lean toward predictability. The final song, Better Life ends in an uplifting, fuzzy-guitar crescendo, the record affirms itself as a statement of vitality, renewal, and defiance. They know their strengths and live them hard, turning heritage into something immediate. For fans of raw-edged rock with blues in its bones, this is a record worth diving into!

COLIN CAMPBELL

STEPHEN WILSON JR

BLANKETS

Big Loud Records

Stephen Wilson Jr's new EP Blankets is a musical firelight in the night these four songs are smoky, intimate, and full of emotional grit. In true, blues-inflected fashion, Wilson Jr. takes four canonical alt-rock and indie torchbearers; Nirvana's Something In The Way, Temple of the Dog's Hunger Strike, The Postal Service's Clark Gable, and Smashing Pumpkins' Tonight, Tonight and reworks them in a style steeped in heartache, grit, and reverence. From the opening tremors of, Something In The Way, Wilson Jr. lets his baritone voice settle deep into the sonic register, letting each phrase hang heavy, each lyric ache with memory. He isn't trying to ghost the original, instead, he draws new shadows. His guitar tone and production are richer, warmer, with a weight of blue notes and low hums weaving in and out. Hunger Strike surprises by breathing in those long, yearning licks, Wilson Jr. leans into the dual tension, making it his own without erasing the legacy. On, Clark Gable, he softens the electronic edges into a more organic backbone, letting the

melody glint through a framework of emotion. The closing Tonight, Tonight feels like a late-night lament; strings and slide guitar colour the piece, and his vocals ride the crest of longing. If Blankets has a flaw, it is that in its devotion to reinterpretation, a listener might miss the full force of an original's rawness. Yet Wilson Jr. doesn't merely mimic, he transforms. The EP feels like a torch passed through time: those alt-rock anthems reborn in blues-steeped skin. For fans of authenticity, of haunted harmonics and a voice wrung from the soul, this release is a stirring, bold statement of musical lineage and emotional depth.

COLIN CAMPBELL

WITCHDOKTORS

IZZATSO?

Bomber Music

This London based four-piece band have been around for several decades playing a mix of Garage, Punk and Rock'n'roll, which they play loud and aggressively. I feel exhausted just listening to them although you must stay alert as they do write some meaningful lyrics covering social and environmental issues. The album opening track, Lightning Strike, provides a thunderous introduction to the band, the dual Guitars of Andy Last and Tom Major drive the song accompanied by a threatening vocal from Andy, while the rhythm section of Lee Page and Joe Colfar certainly don't take any prisoners. The next couple of tracks follow a similar vein before things slow down for Freedom Fighter with its Reggae rhythm and reverberating catchy chorus that creates a 'singalong' feel. Andy has a very impressive vocal style with bucket loads of swagger, which is more akin to Steve Marriot than Johnny Rotten, which he uses to great effect, aided by the Producer/Mixer Tim Palmer who puts the vocals at the front of the mix. While there is very limited Blues music on show, this album will appeal to fans of the

likes of Dr Feelgood with their R&B background, particularly on the final track Kicking The Can where the band creates a Mexican Western vibe with a lone trumpeter playing in the background, as Andy weaves the song tale in one of his quieter moments. This is the bands sixth album which is a thunderous release by a great band that play hard but do introduce some subtle lapses at times. They are also contributing to the PTSD cause with a percentage of profits made from their single Before The War going to the PTSDUK charity.

ADRIAN BLACKLEE

PAUL WELLER

FIND ELDORADO

Warner Music

Weller is a giant. From his early, ground-breaking work with Jam and the Style Council, he has weathered the musical storm to remain firmly at the top of the tree with clever, thoughtful lyricism and a driving musical exploration always at the core of everything he delivers. With Find Eldorado, his latest release, we have a remarkable album full of absolute gems. His voice is as commanding as ever and while some of the material is already well-trodden and known to his fan cohort, the entire project shimmers with superb quality and an irresistible beauty. In recent years, Weller has punched in different directions with releases that have included orchestral backing and others which seem centred on his brilliance and lyricism. Find Eldorado finds Weller again pulling some surprises, especially with its significantly rootsy, acoustic vibe,, while yet again anchoring himself to the world of modern, questing, quality performance. As an inspired and inspirational artist, Weller remains a go-to-guy!

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INDEPENDENT BLUES
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bluesbroadcasters.co.uk

Position	Artist	Album
1	MARY STOKES BAND	HOMETOWN BLUES
2	BLOOD BROTHERS	HELP YOURSELF
3	BYWATER CALL	SUNSHINE: LIVE 2024
4	WALTER TROUT	SIGN OF THE TIMES
5	TOM HAMBRIDGE	DOWN THE HATCH
6	BISON HIP	EVERYTHING THAT CAME BEFORE WAS JUST LEADING UP TO THIS
7	THE BONESHAKERS	LIVE TO BE THIS
8	BILLY BRANCH & THE SONS OF BLUES	THE BLUES IS MY BIOGRAPHY
9	BUDDY GUY	AIN'T DONE WITH THE BLUES
10	ROBERT JON & THE WRECK	HEARTBREAKS & LAST GOODBYES
11	JOE BONAMASSA	B.B. KING'S BLUES SUMMIT 100 VOL. 1
12	DEBBIE BOND	LIVE AT THE SONG THEATRE
13	BB & THE BULLETS	HIGH TIDE
14	KIRK FLETCHER	KEEP ON PUSHING
15	JOHN FOGERTY	LEGACY: THE CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL YEARS
16	ALICE DI MICELE	REVERSE THE FLOW
17	MUD MORGANFIELD	DEEP MUD
18	GWYN ASHTON	GREASE BUCKET
19	CONNOR SELBY	THE TRUTH COMES OUT EVENTUALLY
20	ROBERT KANE	BLUES IS BLUES
21	BIG WOLF BAND	LIVE AT JOE JOE JIM'S
22	EARL THOMAS	LIVE IN LONDON
23	SHERMAN ROBERTSON	ONE MORE TIME EP
24	MICK SIMPSON	CHANGING TIMES
25	RASHAD THE BLUES KID	LIVE IN CLARKSDALE
26	ROOMFUL OF BLUES	STEPPIN' OUT
27	BURNING ROPE	BURNING ROPE
28	THE 251s	FROM THE FIVE
29	ALICE ARMSTRONG	FURY & EUPHORIA
30	PIPER & THE HARD TIMES	GOOD COMPANY
31	LARRY MCCRAY	HEARTBREAK CITY
32	MONSTER MIKE WELCH	KEEP LIVING 'TIL I DIE
33	BIG SHOES	KING SIZE
34	MAD DOG FRIEDMAN	LIVE & ALONE
35	TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND & LEON RUSSELL	MAD DOGS & ENGLISHMEN REVISITED: LIVE AT LOCKN'
36	CANDICE IVORY	NEW SOUTHERN VINTAGE
37	EVA CARBONI	THE BLUES ARCHIVES
38	DEVON ALLMAN	THE BLUES SUMMIT
39	MIKE DANGEROUX	15 SHADES OF BLUE
40	THE MIGHTY BOSSCATS	4000 WEEKS

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